

## **Episode 1: “The Power of Drag” with Donna Sachet**

### YouSpeak Introduction:

**Jasper:** This is you speak radio. With generous support from the Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, an intergenerational project by one institute and the outwards archive on Tongva land.

[MUSIC]

### Episode Introduction:

**Kelly:** I'm Kelly, a rising senior in high school in Los Angeles, and I identify as Asian American and queer. I'm interviewing Donna Sachet, a drag artist and community activist based in San Francisco. We had the chance to discuss her early life experiences as a live-singing drag performer and LGBTQ+ rights activist, as well as the future of our community. Speaking with Donna was both memorable and inspiring, and I'm so glad to be able to share that experience with the listeners of this podcast.

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**Donna Sachet:** So much can be accomplished and we're not there yet. Look at what's happening right now with legislation on a national level, banning books, putting drag shows in some kind of evil category that we're trying to hurt your children. It's just so ridiculous. And yet, especially with drag, we're so visible. It's easy to say, "Oh, let's get. Oh, yeah, those guys dressed in women's clothes." And I think that's why they're coming after us first. But we're not going to be the last. We've had so many advances, but the pendulum of justice is just swinging back the other way right now. We got to be careful.

**Kelly:** it can be really disheartening sometimes to just see, the works of the past being dismissed or try to be erased.

**Donna Sachet:** We have to say, "That battle is over. We will marry who we want to marry. Love is love." Nothing's permanent. We have to be vigilant, and we have to watch out to see who our enemies are and what their motivation is. Education, enlightenment, interviews like this open people's eyes to a lot more. They're going to see me on the screen, say, "Well, wait a minute, I don't like what I see, but you make a lot of sense."

**Kelly:** These battles are a reflection of all these horrible, things, people trying to unmake what we are, but also by fighting it, it does give us power. And your power is the things that you do as a Donna.

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### Interview Begins:

**Kelly:** I'm Kelly, I'm a rising senior. I'm very excited to enter the new school year, and I am interested in journalism and creative writing.

**Donna Sachet:** I'm Donna Sachet, I'm happy and excited to share a little bit of my life and my community with you.

**Kelly:** What was your family like, and what were some of the values that were being taught and prioritized?

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**Donna Sachet:** I was born in the deep south of Georgia and South Carolina, and my parents were very strictly Southern. They were very discriminatory about black people especially. I remember seeing water fountains that said “Colored” and “white” in my lifetime. My high school class was the first fully-integrated high school class that the city had ever seen. Those things are just hard to believe in my lifetime that were true, but here we are now and in today's age. So when I left my parents for college, I pretty much left my family. I didn't have anything in common with their thought processes. I certainly had never had any challenges with them about the LGBTQ+ community because we never even discussed it. I'm not sure I even knew it existed, but. I left home and went to college at Vanderbilt and kind of went on my own way from there and found a life that was rewarding and productive and left all that behind.

**Kelly:** So in college, I assume that you were open to a lot more topics that were never touched.

**Donna Sachet:** I was open to a lot more subjects, exposed to a lot more people in different communities, everything. I still was not out, as it were. it's so funny, today we talk about people not even having to come out. You just are who you are, and you introduce yourself that way. In my world there was certainly an outing process, and I never felt compelled to do that with my family because I was separated from them, with my friends, because it was immaterial. We had things in common, academically, socially. But the gay, the drag, none of that even came up. And I was not even in drag in college at all. So it took till I went to graduate school in Dallas to kind of finally open myself up to what had been a secret from everybody and partially a secret from myself and embrace the lifestyle that had been waiting in the wings or waiting inside me.

**Kelly:** Can I ask, how's that specifically came to be? When did you realize that?

**Donna Sachet:** I had a friend who I sort of fell in love with. He was much more experienced in the gay world. He took me a couple places that I just— my eyes were popping out of my head saying, “My goodness, what is all this?” And, I saw my first drag queens. I had a little bit of theater background and musical background, so that part of it fascinated me. But just to see that you could assume a different identity, and not even when they're on stage, when they're off stage, it was very different people. He wanted to show me the world and show me how it worked and everything. Dallas is really where I came out in that way because a person that was generous to me who I was very fond of. Over the course of my life, there have been times I questioned whether I should make contact again or be open to them about the full life that I live here. I'm so proud of some of the things I've done here, and my mother has no idea. ~~And~~ She lives in South Carolina, and she's very much older now, and ~~um~~, is even losing some of her facilities. I feel like it would hurt her more than it would help anything. But earlier in life, it would be so hard for her to understand. It was hard enough for me to understand I was doing that. But, I do have a gay brother. And ~~um~~, as he began to come out in a dramatic way, I did begin to share with him. He was living in LA, and I was living in Dallas at the time, and we shared some stories. And so I have that one family connection that I can proudly discuss things with him. But otherwise, I was coming out to people who were already out. So it was being welcomed into a community that I was foreign to. And I think a lot of people, maybe college is good for them that way. You have the opportunity to do things that you would never dream of having when you're much younger and some of the things your family and your peers kind of squelch. When you go to college, you experience so many different things. And mine was a very liberal arts education. So we did languages, history, science, everything. And from that I just welcomed creativity and it turned into a lifestyle.

**Kelly:** Yeah, I also really like writing ever since I was a child. So all my life I wanted to be a writer. I didn't know any English when I came here, so my parents took me to the library, and it was really the library that gave me the education. That really inspired me to write a lot, read a lot. I got good at it, and I liked being good at it.

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**Donna Sachet:** When I was coming up and we'd have to go to the library to research a paper, you'd go through the stacks, go through the aisles and get these cards and get the books and look up slight references. And it was a scary place for me because I was doing research for a paper. And I'd say, "Well, while I'm here, let me see: What does 'gay' mean? What does 'drag' mean?" And I looked it up, and it was always these horrible, negative descriptions. And, eventually I thought, "Oh, I don't want to be that," so I just would kind of ignore it again. And of course, today's library is the internet. You can have access to all kinds of positive reinforcement. So I'm not saying it's easier, but it's a very different experience.

**Kelly:** Yeah it is. The internet, when I was finding myself, it really helped me a lot because I was able to access these very positive stories. And it help me with the process.

[MUSIC]

**Kelly:** How did you get into drag, and what inspired you?

**Donna Sachet:** I say, "I never have put drag on. I've let it out," because there was a drag queen in me. There was this person that I've come to name Donna Sachet that was just dying to get out. I was teased as a kid for walking funny. I was teased as a kid for my voice, which is still sort of nasally and feminine. I was teased for my hands. You see, I'm using my hands now— things that boys or men weren't supposed to do I just didn't fit. And when I kind of felt this character in me that I was going to let out, I was able to embrace all those things that had been criticized. My first name, I called myself Donna Winter because I did a Donna Summer number, and I thought, "She's black, and I'm white. I'll be Donna Winter," you know, thinking that was real cute. And the first time I did a number in front of a group, as I left the stage, somebody said, "Look at that *sashay!*" I thought, "Why am I hiding behind? Okay. I'm Donna Sachet." And the thing that I've been teased for all my life was suddenly part of my identity. I think that's very powerful, but something very personal.

**Kelly:** Can you speak on how that made you feel once you embrace this sort of drag persona?

**Donna Sachet:** It gives you such grounding, such courage, such self identity that, something you fought against, whether literally or physically or emotionally, psychologically, you're struggling with it for all your life, and then suddenly the pieces fit.—"I'm going to exaggerate the sashay because I love it, and I love to walk that way. I'm going to use my hands and gesticulate as much as I want because that's part of my nature." This has always been there, and now I have a chance to embrace it. Not only do I have a chance now to let her out and express all those things I felt, but people applaud and laugh and encourage it. I have shows that I go to. I have fundraisers that I can raise money because of the power of drag, and I have audiences that come because of the power of drag. And in San Francisco, it's a city full of creativity, people that welcome differences. And so my experiences was a lot tied up in San Francisco. So as I did things, I said, "Oh, I have an idea, why don't we do a fundraiser and do this?" And people said, "Let's try it!" They're welcome to new ideas. Donna Sachet was born or birthed in the right time, in the right place. I've tapped into a power that I always had. I kind of think of the X-Men, those modern superheroes that suddenly wake up like, "Oh my God, I can lift weights, or I can look through walls." Well, I woke up, and I was able to do this, and it had power.

**Kelly:** Was there a memorable moment when you used this power in your career?

**Donna Sachet:** I have lived in San Francisco for, you know, 30 years now, but I have friends who travel and maybe they go back to home. A friend of mine had to go back to home to take care of his mother. That was Alabama. Well, I was sorry for him and sad that I wasn't going to see him again because, that's back to the Deep South that I came from, and I wouldn't want to go to anyway. But he called me one day and said that, "He was doing the first gay pride in Mobile, Alabama. Would I help him?" Well, He was such

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a good friend. How could I say no? So I said "Yes," and I went to Mobile, Alabama, on a plane by myself. Wasn't Donna in the airport, wasn't Donna till I got to the house. But then I was Donna in Alabama, and we had a difficult time. It was a parade that he had organized, the very first in Mobile. It was going to end in this historic square, big old, Southern trees. And People were there with boots and t-shirts and gay paraphernalia trying to welcome a gay community in Alabama. So I was in the parade. And then At the end of parade, we're in this square that was where the festival was going to be, we had a stage set up of entertainment, entertainers and all those booths I was talking about and My friend who I had come to visit, he said, "You have to get up on the stage and open the festival." I said, "I flew across the country to Alabama. I've got to get up there now?" I had fears that, I would be hurt. Behind the stage, somebody had parked a big semi-truck., and on the side of the truck. It said "Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. Go Home." Pitchforks. It even had my name. "Donna, Go Home." So they've done a little research, I guess. That was scary, but I knew my friend wouldn't let anything like that to happen. I thought, "If something begins to happen, he'll get me out here. Maybe Mobile needs to hear this." I thought long and hard... "What song would I sing?" And I do sing; I don't lip sync. I sing my own songs. As I was beginning the festival, I got up there and I sang the National Anthem. Well, all the people put the bullhorns down, put their hand over their heart. They were Americans, too. I've always said we have more in common than we have that separates us. They were Americans, and I was American. Of course, I sang the hell out of that National Anthem. When the national anthem ended, I looked back, and the truck had been pulled away. The bullhorns, those people had scattered. My power had decimated the disturbance, and we went on with our stage. We had wonderful entertainment, and Pride was born in Mobile, Alabama, thanks to my friend Bob Bunson.

**Kelly:** That's amazing. That really is a good story. I mean when was this? 1990?

**Donna Sachet:** Probably 2000.

**Kelly:** Well, even back then, there was just so much stigma surrounding our identity. For a performer to find this connection, through all these differences that divide us or the things that we think divide us. That's really powerful.

**Donna Sachet:** I mean, I felt hatred when I saw that stage and all that stuff written over there. I felt hatred and feared violence, but I just somehow found the strength to say, "Okay, what do we have in common?"

**Kelly:** The power of patriotism, but more than that, of course. I'm really glad you shared that.

[MUSIC]

**Kelly:** How did you get involved in the Imperial Court System with José Sarria?

**Donna Sachet:** I just was fascinated when I first moved to San Francisco to hear about this thing called the court system, and it was created by Jose Sarria. And I read about him a little bit. And he was the first openly gay person to run for pol- political office in the United States. One day he said, "We have people representing us, and the police are still rounding us up, and we're thrown in some paddy wagons, and we're losing our jobs and our family because our names are being printed in the paper. Just because we were in a rest stop, and maybe weren't doing anything, but we're just suspected of everything." And he said he was gonna run for City Council, and everybody said, "You can't." He said, "What? Did you say can't? I will." And He made business cards, He's wearing a little suit and he had a campaign, and he won so many more votes than anybody thought he would win. It was not enough to get on the Council, but it was enough to make people sit up and pay attention. After that, a good friend of mine, Mark Leno, who was on the Supervisors Board, and he said after that: "No one would run for political office in the state without first checking with the LGBTQ+ community because there was power there." There was a bloc

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almost that-- people who voted for him. Getting to know him was fabulous because he was a person, and he lived in San Francisco, and I did. He was an older gentleman. There was many years between him and me, as there are currently between you and me, but he was a funny person. He had great stories to tell. At one time, there was a law in California that you could be arrested for ~~uh~~, attempting to fool the public by wearing clothes of the opposite gender. What a law. It was trying to keep people from cross-dressing, basically. He started putting a little piece of paper in his dress that said, "I'm a boy. I'm not trying to fool anybody. I'm a boy, but I'm wearing these clothes." Haha! I thought that was so funny and so powerful when he told me that story. I read it later in history books, and it's so true. He just had a way of figuring out a way to add some humor and, again, get past what they thought was their power with his power.

**Donna Sachet:** The Imperial Court, he founded in San Francisco. It was a campy kind of thing. You had a king and a queen, basically an Emperor, Empress, we call it. They were representatives of this new burgeoning community. If somebody did want to say "I wonder what's going on with the gay community?" Well, check with the Empress, check with the Emperor. The Imperial Court is designed to be fundraising arm largely for the gay community. It's also, informally, a political arm saying, "Wait a minute, why are you throwing us in jail? What's right about that law? What are we doing wrong? Who are we hurting?" They're now Imperial Courts in seventy cities across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. It's international, and this little man in San Francisco that I got to know started it. I ran for Empress here and won, remarkably, and it just became a part of my life that I had carried on a legacy that I believed in and love so much. Jose was proud of me, and I was so proud to continue his work. When I became Empress, there had already been 29 empresses before me. I thought, "Okay, what can I do that's a little different?" I really took it to mean, "I'm the Empress of San Francisco," so I would go to the opening of the opera, which is not a place the drag queen might go, I would go to ball games. I would go to citywide functions as the Empress of San Francisco, usually with my crown on, and it opened peoples eyes. It was fascinating to see the growth that could come from that. I also raised a lot of money with my Emperor. We both sang, which was unusual. When we traveled across the country to these other Courts in Canada, the United States, and Mexico, we would sing duets and people got a kick out of that, and we had a lot of fun with it. It was a wonderful year and a kind of a stepping off place for me to continue influencing the City and experiencing and fulfilling my own power.

**Kelly:** It is your power. Singing music. It's all part of you.

**Donna Sachet:** It is. Absolutely. Now I can do it as me. Hehe!

[MUSIC]

**Kelly:** Can you talk a little bit about your leadership in HIV or AIDS activism?

**Donna Sachet:** It's kind of a painful question, because when I lived in New York for seven years, I was working for Saks Fifth Avenue, and I became a buyer, and it was such a hard job. It was a very absorbing job. And at that time, in the 80s, it was the height of HIV/AIDS. I did know people who were suddenly sick or had marks or it just was, and they didn't know what it was so scary, but I was working so hard that I didn't see a way that I could contribute. I saw people talk about ACT UP. And then there was a church service at Saint Patrick's Cathedral that they interrupted, and I thought, "Oh my God, who would do such a thing?" And then I thought later, "Somebody needed to." When I got to San Francisco, I made a resolution that I couldn't be on the sidelines anymore. You'd walk down the street, and people had canes and walkers, and they would have been partially blinded. There was a lot of it very, very apparent on the streets of San Francisco, and I just couldn't sit on the sidelines anymore. That's when I really became more active in the cause and supporting organizations that helped people get information that help people recover or find proper care. San Francisco was the beginning of that for the nation in a lot of ways, became the model of how do we take care of our own because the national leadership was ignoring it for far too long. And you found there were people that were diagnosed with AIDS, and it was such a death

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sentence that they would sell their life insurance policy so they had some money to live. Then they would die, and they had no money for a funeral or anything. And so the organizations that helped them with finances, when their parents wouldn't even visit them and wouldn't acknowledge them because they had the AIDS, a secret disease that was automatically associated with being gay. It was just so much shame and stigma involved. All that really came home for me, and I supported any organization that raised money to help people, to get education to people. At that time, we weren't even looking at prevention. We were just looking at: you had it, so now what can we do? Because it was everywhere. Later it became possible to diagnose early and prevent people from getting worse and prevent people from even getting it. It was hard to believe that that finally became possible. Now there are lots of people that live an active life and are not in fear of it at all, but it was so painful to be in a city I loved doing what I love and seeing people dropping beside me with passion in their hearts. They just physically couldn't do it anymore because of this disease, and nobody understood. The federal government was ignoring it, and it was very painful. One of the first things I did was start a holiday cabaret. I called it "Songs of the Season" because I'm not really into church, but I love Christmas music, I did it for twenty-five years, and it was always to benefit the AIDS Emergency Fund, which was this group that had emergency grants to people with AIDS that were saying, "I'm on my last leg. My parents aren't helping. I sold my life insurance. I have no savings." They were just financially helping people to live a dignified life. They eventually merged with another organization, PRC, that is helping people with AIDS deal with the new modern challenges. How do you confront your life challenges as a person with AIDS, which can be controlled and return you to somewhat normal life? I continue to support PRC because it's kind of the parent organization of the AIDS Emergency Fund. So 25 of the 30 years I've been here, I've been active with these AIDS causes.

**Kelly:** It really is just one example of "Silence is Death."

**Donna Sachet:** People early on said, some lawmakers would even say, "Well, you know, it's a terrible shame, but at least it's happening to them." We were categorized, stigmatized. saying that, "We don't know what it is and quite understand how it works or is you know, basically knocking down your immune system or what is that everything? Well, we don't have, don't worry about it. It's affecting them." And That really became a condemnation of the whole community. People thought, "Maybe they deserved it." I mean, all that kind of stuff just sticks in my heart; it's hard to believe.

**Kelly:** They think these differences make us less human, or less of a citizen of this country.

[MUSIC]

**Kelly:** All these achievements and awards, what would you say is ~~am~~; a challenge you faced?

**Donna Sachet:** The first year I went to the opening of the opera, I had a wonderful escort, and he said, "Well, I don't know what you're complaining about. Everything seems fine." And I said, "You don't see the looks we're getting? You don't see the glances and the pointing, the whispering?" He was not aware of it. I was deadly aware of it. The second year was a little easier. The third year we were welcomed at the top of the stairs for the opening of the opera by Willie Brown, the mayor at the time, Nancy Pelosi, who was in Congress, and Didi Wilsey, who was a local socialite. I thought, "I've arrived." I mean, that was a three-year battle. So there are struggles along the way but rewards.

**Kelly:** Exactly. And I think the takeaway to how to approach that ~~am~~, is to never be ashamed of who you are.

**Donna Sachet:** And don't buy into other people who may not get it. Maybe they'll get it eventually, but some hard nuts will never get it. Don't let that stop you. I was at the white House recently. Can you believe that? I was invited to the White House for the party that they had this year, the LGBT party, on the South Lawn. Of course, I drop everything and fly there and had a new outfit, and I just couldn't believe

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it. I had a conversation with a few people I knew there and meeting new people, and you look over your shoulder and say, "Excuse me, I just have to look for a minute. There's the White House with the columns wrapped in the six colors of the Rainbow Flag that were created right here in San Francisco, and I'm standing here talking to you. It's hard to believe."

**Donna Sachet:** You have to pick up on the work before, the ones before me. Jose was very brave. He ran for political office. I've not done that. He didn't win, but he gained more courage from that and went on to do other things. There are people doing important legislative work now. We have a gay caucus in Sacramento. There's, I think, sixteen LGBTQ officeholders, and they work together on legislation. That's unheard of in decades before. You follow up on what people have done before you. You follow your heart and not everything happens, but a lot of things do.

**Kelly:** I like that. I haven't done any of those things either, but I could be inspired.

**Donna Sachet:** You're preparing, I know this is one interview. You'll have other interviews that will make you sit up and say, "Well, I never thought of that." Some of it won't ring true for you, but some will. Some will show you a different avenue. Being 30 years your senior, it's heartening for me to see people curious and wanting to pick up the mantle and do the next thing. I'm excited for you.

**Kelly:** Thank you. I'm just excited to learn. I'm already learning so much from this interview alone. Any advice you'd give to young folks like me in the community?

**Donna Sachet:** Some of the times I was most scared, I pushed forward and accomplished something. I pushed forward and embarrassed myself and had to come back a second time. Push against your embarrassment. Push against your fears. Have allies; have people with you. So much can be accomplished, and we're not there yet. Look at what's happening right now with legislation on a national level: banning books, putting drag shows in some kind of evil category that we're trying to hurt your children. It's just so ridiculous. And yet, especially with drag, we're so visible. It's easy to say, "Oh, let's get those guys, men dressed in women's clothes." And I think that's why they're coming after us first, but we're not going to be the last. It's opening a whole can of worms. We've had so many advances, but the pendulum of justice is just swinging back the other way right now. We've got to be careful.

**Kelly:** Do you think these changes that have been made by so many uh, queer people before us have been undone or is regressing?

**Donna Sachet:** I think many of the changes we've made as individuals within the community are long-lasting because we've waited so long, and what they accomplished, there's no shutting that door again. But legal recognition and a larger recognition can be reversed very quickly. I mean, Laws can be changed. Look how long people wanted to get married. I remember I knew Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, the first two women who were married in San Francisco when the marriage ban was lifted. They'd been together for 52 years and people were saying, "Oh, it's too early. You're rushing. We're not ready for marriage yet." They were ready for marriage. They had been ready. And, just seeing how happy it made them, that was great. So why not push that envelope a little bit more? Even when it seems like people are not recognizing. Now, I would not be surprised if in the next few years there are challenges, again, to same-gender marriages. But we have to say, "That battle is over. We will marry who we want to marry. Love is love." Nothing's permanent. We have to be vigilant, and we have to watch out to see who our enemies are and what their motivation is. A lot of times it's fear. A lot of times it's the way they were raised. Education, enlightenment, interviews like this open people's eyes to a lot more. They're going to see me say, "Well, wait a minute, I don't like what I see, but you make a lot of sense." Those struggles were so hard won. We fought, and people lost their livelihoods, lost their marriages, lost their families, their church affiliations, trying to pursue the right thing. People are trying to take it away again. We can't let

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that happen. We have to guard those battles that have been won and tell people, "They've been won. Let's move on to the next battle. Don't try to change back to another time."

**Kelly:** I feel like it can be really disheartening sometimes to just see the works of the past being dismissed or try to be erased. As you said, nothing is permanent, but we will try to be.

**Donna Sachet:** If I remained in Georgia and South Carolina: would I be who I am and doing what I'm doing today? Perhaps not, because that's a much bigger battle. I moved to San Francisco, which was ripe for change and which was open to creativity, a place that had seen battles won, so they were encouraged. It's a long battle, but it's worth fighting because it brings such fulfillment and joy to those who have fought for so long.

**Kelly:** These battles are a reflection of all these horrible things, people trying to unmake what we are, but also by fighting it, it does give us power, and your power is the things that you do as a Donna.

[MUSIC]

**Donna Sachet:** You mentioned your GSA, you changed it to the QSA, right?

**Kelly:** The QAA? Yeah. Queer Ally Alliance.

**Donna Sachet:** In those organizations, you find fellow battlers, people that have the same cause, and maybe you don't feel you can do it yourself, but with your pals and your friends and your comrades and within a club, you can accomplish more. Use that strength in numbers.

**Kelly:** Our counselor grew up in a time where queer was used as a derogatory term, so she was very reluctant to make that change, but my teacher really fought for that name change to be more inclusive. Because even if it's a name, it represents all of us.

**Donna:** I grew up in a time when, even within our community, people started saying, "Okay, we got too many letters in this alphabet thing let's just call it queer." It was not my first choice. I'd been called that in childhood not even knowing what it meant, but it was just a destructive term, but I've got to change at the times, and if that term is being embraced by the new LGBTQ+ community, great. Let me get on board because it's a different word.

**Kelly:** Nothing is permanent... What is your hope for the future?

**Donna Sachet:** I just wish people could get beyond their irrational hatred, their irrational objection to things that are either none of their business or don't even affect them. I think the very fact that I'm standing up here doing this would upset people, but why? The internet was supposed to expose us all to more, and it has, but the downside has been some of the anonymous criticism people get. If we use the internet for this wealth of knowledge, so people can find out that by being LGBTQ+, you're not condemning yourself to a life of hardship or a life of terrible tragedy. Leave those old beliefs behind, and open your eyes, and educate yourself. My wish is that people would be more level-headed and educate themselves consciously and extend their hand and just shake my hand for a minute. I won't hold it that long. Haha! Just shake my hand, and see what we have in common.

**Kelly:** Would you say this interview is like a very long handshake?

**Donna Sachet:** Well, I think your hand came out much more willingly than some do. Ahaha. You wanted to learn and you wanted to hear. Keep your ears and your eyes open, you keep your heart open. I don't understand people that do certain things, but I'm trying to keep my eyes and ears open. Maybe there's some kind of cultural thing that. Don't be afraid of it.



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**Kelly:** I think times change and people are growing a little more open to it. What do you think, the younger generation should do in order to make the most out of the things that you've all left behind?

**Donna Sachet:** Follow your heart. What leads you into a constructive ~~th~~, project? What makes you want to come up with something nobody else has ever come up with? Follow that. Along the way, you'll find some companions who think the same way, and you'll find some people that don't. You will find some jealousy, and you'll find some destructive behavior. But if your heart is really there, you're going to see benefits pretty quickly, and the next thing is bigger and they're more benefits along the way. I wish I'd been not as afraid as I was for half my life, and I hope that young people can come up less afraid from the beginning. Just say, "What am I afraid of? They did it for the first time. I'm just doing it for the eighteenth time." Push beyond your fears, your fear of embarrassment, your fear of failure, and just push. You have to figure your way out and your way forward and take people with you. Thirty years ago, if I'd had some of the opportunities, the internet, had encouragement of a GSA or QSA that would give you opportunities like this, what could have happened? That's why the future's so ripe with promise that you're starting eighteen steps ahead of most of the ones that were thirty years before you. I'm tying up my hands and finishing up my journey. You're just beginning yours. I'm excited for the future. I just think everything we do should be focused on our community, our love of our own people, and then always looking outside and saying, "What is it about us that you don't get? I'm happy to talk to you. I'm happy to take you to one of my events and show you the love and the joy that there is in this community, my life full of joy." And I'm then very blessed that way.

**Kelly:** I think the fact that my life is full of these open doors that were closed pretty recently, it's really all because of people like you and your generation's work.

**Donna Sachet:** I appreciate that. I can't take a lot of credit because it was all little pieces along the way. José Sarria, when he passed away, he was so well known in San Francisco, over a thousand people came to his funeral at Grace Cathedral, the big cathedral in San Francisco. There were two mayors there, some political people there, and I saw a picture of him one time, black and white picture of him protesting outside of Grace Cathedral, saying, "We are people, too." Then, to think all those years later, probably 70 years later, when he died, the very church that he was protesting at was celebrating him and his funeral. That's a great, great, epic kind of timeline. And I hope he was proud of that. I tried to make sure he knew how much we appreciated him. So do that: let people know how much they're valued and appreciated. When I'm walking down the street and somebody yells, "Donna!" and they wave, it's like, "I'm known." That tickles me. What did I do to be known? But I am and I appreciate that we're all part of the same movement.

**Kelly:** It's really inspiring to feel that we're not alone. This interaction is incredibly valuable, and I got to learn so much. I got to learn a lot that power comes in different ways. It doesn't have to be like a political position, like Jose's, even though that was really important. Expressing yourself and liberating yourself is power because other people get to see that, and that could change how many people perceive the people you're associated with in general.

**Donna:** The way you conducted this interview and the questions you asked got a lot out of me that I haven't often shared, and I don't know why it made me cry a couple of times, but it did. That's nothing to be ashamed of. Emotion is part of our lives. So thank you.

**Kelly:** I should be thanking you. Thank you.

**Donna Sachet:** Best of luck to you. From San Francisco. Signing out.

Interview Concludes.

# YouSpeak Radio 2024 Audio Transcript



[MUSIC]

YouSpeak Outro:

**Jasper:** This is...

**Jasper, Milo, Kelly, Madeline, Charlotte, Ameer:** YouSpeak Radio!

**Jasper:** We are Jasper Chen,

**Milo:** Milo Drake,

**Madeline:** Madeleine Lee,

**Kelly:** Kelly Hsu,

**Charlotte:** Charlotte Ly,

**Ameer:** Ameer Flores.

**Jasper:** With generous support from the Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, an intergenerational project by One Institute and The Outwords Archive on Tongva land.