



Youspeak Radio Episode 4 – [subtitle] – With Karina Samala
Audio transcript

Full audio: <https://www.onearchives.org/youspeak-radio-ep-4-united-with-bamby-salcedo/>

Gabriel DuBransky (00:00):

This is-

Group (00:01):

Youspeak Radio.

Gabriel DuBransky (00:03):

... a project by ONE Archives Foundation, with generous support from the California Humanities.

Téa Wagstaff (00:15):

Hi, my name is Téa Wagstaff. I'm a high school junior, and on June 17th, 2021, I interviewed Bamby Salcedo of the TransLatin@ Coalition. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our interview was through a video call, but that didn't make it any less emotional and powerful.

Bamby Salcedo (00:34):

Society will help us transform those institutions that have marginalized our people for many years. If we understand our power and if we walk our path with dignity and love and appreciation for everything that exists in this world, then we are going to transform the world, so do whatever you can do transform the world.

Téa Wagstaff (01:03):

I found it difficult to keep myself from crying as she spoke. You can hear it in every word, how much she loves her community. As a trans kid with very few trans adults in my life to look up to, I left the interview feeling incredibly loved and asking myself what more I can do to care for and uplift the voices of those around me. So here it is, my interview with Bamby Salcedo.

Bamby Salcedo (01:44):

Téa, first, let me just say thank you so much and express my gratitude and my honor to be here with you and sharing space with you. My name is Bamby Salcedo and I do have the privilege to be part of an amazing organization that is called the TransLatin@ Coalition. So, thank you again so much for your willingness and for the invitation to have this conversation with me. Thank you.

Téa Wagstaff (02:16):

Thank you for being here. So for a lot of your work with the TransLatin@ Coalition, a lot of it's about advocating for your community. I wanted to know, what has this work taught you about how to care for and strengthen your community?

Bamby Salcedo (02:38):



Well, I think one of the things that I could say is that I have been doing this kind of work for, obviously before you were born. I've been doing this work for more than 20 years, almost a quarter of a century. This work has taught me a lot. One, it has taught me in not to give up on hope, understanding that the two cents that I am able to contribute to the broader of man, it's simply for all of us to have a better world and the world that we all want to live in. Through this work, I have also learned a lot of pain, a lot of insecurity, because through this work also, there is a lot of marginalization. I have learned also to push and fight, because I have understand also that I am a survivor of many challenges, but those challenges are... my survival of the experiences that I have survived are the same experiences that unfortunately many of my community are also experiencing. I have learned a lot.

Bamby Salcedo ([04:31](#)):

I have learned also to understand that I do have privilege and that through my privilege, I do have also a voice and that I should use my voice because I do hold this privilege. I also have a responsibility and I use my voice for many members of my community who are voiceless. Yeah, I've learned a lot. I mean, I've learned a lot. I also grown to be a strong person. I also learned to understand that we could be the architects of the world that we want to create. For me as the leader of a national advocacy organization that is called the TransLatin@ Coalition, understanding what those needs are, understanding that the work that we do has to be informed by our people and really empower our people in whatever way possible. That's really the work that we do as an organization. That's why also what I have learned to just do whatever I can in order to really change the landscape of our people.

Téa Wagstaff ([06:02](#)):

You've done a lot of work supporting trans and non-binary youth. There are so many people you've inspired over the years. Who is someone in your life that's inspired you in your work and just to live your life as who you are?

Bamby Salcedo ([06:24](#)):

Certainly there has been many, many beautiful and amazing people who have inspired me. In fact, I am who I am and I came to be who I am because of the people. I always say that I am a community investment, and so even when I started getting into this work, there was people there before me, so for me, it's super also important that I honor the people who have been here before me and that I recognize that, that I recognize that I and many of us stand on the shoulders of our ancestors and our transcestors.

Bamby Salcedo ([07:16](#)):

Here, specifically locally, because Los Angeles is home to me, and so when I started getting involved in community work, there were amazing trans women even locally here who not only inspire me, but also serve as a reflection of who I could be. Some of those individuals unfortunately are not here with us some, like Ms. Kelly Trambaco, for instance, Ms. Mama Terry. There are other trans women who are still here with us who were a beacon of hope for me, like Brenda [inaudible 00:08:01] Gonzalez, like Maria Roman and others who I saw myself reflected and I saw the possibilities when I saw them working, at that time, nonprofit organizations.

Bamby Salcedo ([08:17](#)):



I was inspired in that way. That's how I also started getting involved in social justice work. But obviously as I learn about our history and as I learn about the people who have paved the way for many of us, I would obviously remiss if I don't mention Sylvia Rivera and Marsha T. Johnson and others. I do have a very close relationship with Ms. Major. Those are the individuals who continue to inspire me. I also need to mention Valerie Spencer. All of these people who have helped me understand who I am in as a person and helped me craft my narrative and understand that, like I said, I am a community investment. In fact, I am the CEO of a beautiful national organization, but my definition of a CEO is community elevated officer. So that's just something that I always have pressing with me so that I always continue to understand who I am and where I come from.

Téa Wagstaff ([09:38](#)):

Yeah. That's amazing. One thing I know about just being a kid in high school is you don't really learn about all the people who came before you. You don't really know any of your history and the people who made it so that you can be who you who are you are today. I think that's a story that needs to be told for a lot of kids to hear.

Bamby Salcedo ([10:27](#)):

Thank you. Appreciate that.

Téa Wagstaff ([10:29](#)):

What does being an activist mean to you, and what advice do you have for young people who want to get involved and help their community and continue the fight for equality and justice?

Bamby Salcedo ([10:49](#)):

To be honest with you, I don't consider myself an activist. I don't call myself an activist. Other people do call me an activist. What I do know that who I am is that I am a servant to the people. I just do what needs to be done in whatever way possible. The work that I do and the work that I have done, I've only done it because I know that the lives of my people are on the line every single day. I, as a trans woman, also who has survived violence and understanding that the violence that we experience, it's every single day. For me, the way I see life, it's whatever. I mean whatever in a way that the world is an oppressive world for us, and the world has been a marginalizing world for us. For me, I'm going to do anything and everything that I can in order to change that.

Bamby Salcedo ([12:09](#)):

I don't know if that's activism, but I know that what the people wants and need. I don't consider myself an activist and I don't claim to be an activist. I am one who is a servant to the people and one who will continue to serve the people and what the people want. I know that what we want as people is change in our society. We want for trans people to be recognized as who we are, as people. We want for us to not to be afraid when we walk down the street, when we walk out of our houses, if we have a house. That's what we want. We want to live life with dignity. We want to have basic services. We want to have access to school and wealth and education and all of those things. I am going to continue to push and to fight for all of that. I would not say equality, because equality is not the same as equity, and so I am going to continue to push for equity for our people.



Téa Wagstaff ([13:39](#)):

That's definitely something that nobody, at least when you're learning in history classes, it's always the idea of one person changed the world, but the idea that you can be a part of just something and just be not... you don't have to be changing the world on your own. You're just speaking up for your community and fighting together. I think that's something that gets overlooked a lot. What's something you wish you could tell a younger version of yourself?

Bamby Salcedo ([14:26](#)):

A younger version of myself? What I could tell a younger version of myself? I would tell a younger version of myself that, "It's not your fault. You're not guilty of the circumstances that happened to you. That despite the fact that whatever you're going through in your mind and in your spirit, that you are a beautiful soul. That you are a beautiful person and you deserve to be loved and you deserve to have everything and anything that you want, and that I hope that you understand that you are a divine presence in this world, and that you have a purpose, and that you're destined to be here. You're supposed to be who you are destined to be. Don't give up on you. Don't give up on the people who love you and don't give up on those who want the best for you." That's what I would tell my younger self.

Téa Wagstaff ([15:49](#)):

I watched a good number of your speeches on YouTube. You're an incredible speaker. That's really amazing. I know the pandemic canceled or delayed a lot of big conferences and gatherings. How has the pandemic changed the way you choose to speak up for your community?

Bamby Salcedo ([16:17](#)):

I don't think the pandemic has changed the way I speak for and about my people. I think the pandemic has helped me understand the importance of continuing to fight. An example of that is when the world shut down, we maintained our doors open because we knew that even if it was food that our people needed to get, that our people were not going to get it in some places. For us, it was essential, at least for me, that we continue to provide the services that our people need, because when it comes to these type of situations, we are the last people that they care about. Even if it was one meal a day that we were going to provide our people, we were going to do that, so we did that. Very quickly, we learned to adapt and implement the safety measures that were suggested and required. We did that. Always putting the safety of the people who come and access services here and the people who provide those services. We're really lucky that I can say that this is my second pandemic that I survived. I'm very lucky. A couple of our staff did get infected, but they're okay now. One of our board members died, Lorena Borjas from New York. That was very painful because she's my friend and she's just an incredible person who is no longer here with us.

Bamby Salcedo ([18:27](#)):

But also, many friends, many of the people who come here to access services also perish through all of this, but we also learn to continue to be resilient and continue to advocate and continue to push for resources and understanding also that our community, again, wasn't getting the support that they needed. I was able to reach out and request people to step up and provide resources for us to provide relief to our community. Last year, we did a bunch of different things, but specifically through this pandemic, we were able to distribute \$250,000 back to our community in emergency relief.



Bamby Salcedo ([19:26](#)):

In the middle of the pandemic, also, we made history. For the first time in the history of the state of California, a piece of legislation was introduced and crafted, organized, mobilized and pushed all the way through the governor's desk. That is Assembly Bill 2218, which is the Transgender Wellness and Equity Fund. That's a huge victory for all of our community, because again, this year has been also to ensure that there is resources, or money in this case, specifically put in this fund, into this to this piece of legislation that would specifically support the livelihood of trans people.

Bamby Salcedo ([20:17](#)):

I could almost say, because apparently pretty soon, I think either Monday or tomorrow, but the governor's going to release their budget and my understanding that there is a line item in the governor's budget in which includes \$15 million that are going to be dedicated specifically to support and build healthy trans people across California. I learn to continue to be resilient despite the challenges and despite a global pandemic that has impacted the whole world, certainly has impacted me, but again, as I stated at the beginning, one of the things that I've learned is not to lose hope, but rather find ways to continue to be resilient and to continue to push for what our people needs.

Téa Wagstaff ([21:11](#)):

I know from the few stories about trans people that end up mainstream and on TV and stuff, it always seems to center around the trauma of being trans, and there's a lot of pain that comes along with it. But at the same time, it's great we can acknowledge those stories because they're real and they're worth telling. But I would like to know, what's one thing in your life that really brings you a lot of joy?

Bamby Salcedo ([22:09](#)):

Oh, what brings me joy? There's a lot of things that obviously brings me joy. What brings me joy is young people like yourself who I can see as the hope that I and many of us are continue to look for, but I also find joy when I see many people who I've known over the years who I have contributed to their wellbeing in some ways. I've known young people who I've known young people who I've known since they were like 12, 13, 15, and they're now 30 and they're well and thriving and they're just navigating the world and positioning themselves in different spaces. That obviously brings me joy, but also when I see people who come here at our organization to access services, when they first come here, many have shattered souls and many have, their eyes are... they don't have the light that most of us do have. But when I start seeing their light and when I start seeing them smiling, and when I start that they're doing good, then they're doing better then how when they came in here, that certainly tells me that I am doing what I'm supposed to be doing and that certainly gives me joy.

Bamby Salcedo ([24:00](#)):

The beautiful people who work here with us gives me joy every single day, because I get to see who they are and how they have developed in the time that they have been here. Even those who are no longer here with us that I have contributed in some ways in their lives. We as an organization have been sort of like a training board for many trans people, and so they come through here and then they're in other spaces and other organizations and that is great, because that also brings me joy. There's multiple things.



Bamby Salcedo ([24:40](#)):

Water gives me joy. Whenever I go to the water, whether it's the beach or a river or something like that, it definitely gives me joy because I feel that I am getting cleansed when I get in the water. Solitude also gives me joy. It gives me the opportunity to connect with my creator, my higher power and be grateful for the opportunity to continue to be walking this world. Also, my spirituality gives me joy, having that connection with my higher power, my creator also gives me joy and allows me to continue to walk this earth.

Téa Wagstaff ([25:25](#)):

That's incredible. Thank you so much for everything you've been doing. It's amazing and really inspiring and just incredible. Is there anything else you'd want to say?

Bamby Salcedo ([25:54](#)):

Well, once again, I just want to express my humble gratitude for the opportunity to have this conversation with you. If I can just leave you with a message, and to all the beautiful people who are going to be listening, is that you are a beautiful person and I can see that you are going to build and create many things. I am so grateful for your existence in this world. If I can just ask you to walk your path with dignity and love and appreciation to everything around you, and also understand that we have a responsibility to our peoples. For us to use for you, for the people, for the world, to use your power, your privilege to transform the world for all of us to have a better world and understanding that you also have power. That you have power, but also that collectively there is a whole community that has power. Understanding our power will help us transform society, will help us transform those institutions that have marginalized our people for many years. If we understand our power and if we walk our path with dignity and love and appreciation for everything that exists in this world, then we are going to transform the world, so do whatever you can to transform the world.

Téa Wagstaff ([27:49](#)):

Thank you so much.

Gabriel DuBransky ([27:55](#)):

This is-

Group ([27:56](#)):

Youspeak Radio.

Gabriel DuBransky ([27:58](#)):

We are...

Cassidy All ([27:59](#)):

Cassidy All.

Savi Bindass ([28:00](#)):

Savi Bindass.



Dean Campbell ([28:01](#)):

Dean Campbell.

Gabriel DuBransky ([28:02](#)):

Gabriel DuBransky.

Jaileen Vargas-Garcia ([28:03](#)):

Jaileen Vargas-Garcia.

Téa Wagstaff ([28:05](#)):

Téa Wagstaff.

Erik Adamian ([28:06](#)):

Erik Adamian.

Umi Hsu ([28:08](#)):

And Umi Hsu.

Gabriel DuBransky ([28:09](#)):

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