

**Finding Aid for the  
Lydia R. Otero Archive  
Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections**

**OVERVIEW**

Identifier/Call No.: LA MSS 0003

Creators: Lydia R. Otero

Title: Lydia R. Otero Archive

Dates: 1955-2023 (bulk 1983-94)

Language: Materials in English and Spanish

Scope and Content: The archive contains photographs, posters, ephemera, planning documents, and personal items belonging to Lydia Otero, a non-binary Latinx activist, educator and author. Otero moved to Los Angeles from Tucson, Arizona in the late 1970s to live openly as a lesbian-identified person as part of the gay community. As an activist in Los Angeles, Otero advocated for greater visibility, rights, and healthcare in the LGBTQ+ community. Many of the items such as posters, flyers and t-shirts, were designed and printed by Otero by hand and with the aid of an early Macintosh computer. Other materials include research for Otero's 2023 memoir titled "L.A. Interchanges: A Brown & Queer Archival Memoir." Most items fall between the years of 1983 and 1994 when Otero was most active in Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU), Lesbianas Unidas (LU), and Bienestar.

Quantity: 3.23 cubic feet (3 boxes)

Location: Rare Books, South Stacks. Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections, 630 W. 5th Street, Los Angeles, California 90071.

**ADMINISTRATIVE/BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY**

Lydia R. Otero (b. 1955) was active in Lesbians of Color from 1979 to 1982 and attended the First National Lesbians of Color Conference in 1983 in Malibu, California. Otero was also active in Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (or GLLU) in Los Angeles from 1983 through 1991 and served as President of GLLU for two years, from 1988-1990. Dr. Otero was one of the founding members of Lesbianas Unidas (or LU) in 1983, remaining active with the organization until 1991. Other community involvement included Bienestar, a Gay Latino AIDS Project-group central to the city's burgeoning queer, brown, and activist scene.

Otero received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1992 and a Master of Arts degree in 1996 from California State University, Los Angeles, and also received a PhD in History. Prior to attending college, Otero trained as an electrician and worked in IBEW Local Union 11 in Los Angeles from 1982 to 1994. Their labor contributed to building some of the most iconic structures in Los Angeles, such as the U.S. Bank Tower, Universal Studios' CityWalk, the Metro Rail, as well as the reconstruction of Central Library after the devastating 1986 fire.

Otero's 2023 memoir, "L.A. Interchanges: A Brown & Queer Archival Memoir" chronicles 20 years of living in Los Angeles from 1978-98 through vividly told stories, photographs and personal archival documents, many of which are included in this collection. Part working-class memoir and part documentary history, "L.A. Interchanges" follows Lydia Otero as they move from the homes of family members, dancefloors, work sites, and Los Angeles's organizing spaces in search of brown and queer belonging. Through

photographs, archival documents, and compelling storytelling, Otero weaves a gripping, passionate narrative of personal becoming amid the political and cultural currents of 1980s Los Angeles. Otero's parallel story of becoming an electrician offers a unique vantage point of a city in the midst of restructuring.

Otero's first memoir was "In the Shadows of the Freeway: Growing Up Brown & Queer" (2019), which centers on their childhood in Tucson, Arizona. They have also published: "Notitas: Select Columns from the Tucson Citizen" (2021), and "La Calle: Spacial Conflicts and Urban Renewal in a Southwestern City" (2010).

Lydia Otero participated in the documentary "UNIDAD: Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos." It aired on PBS in 2023. As a Tucson resident, Otero continues to be active in working to preserve the local history of the Mexican American community.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

#### Use Restrictions

Any reproduction, redistribution, publication, or other use, by any means, without prior written permission is prohibited.

Photocopies, copy prints and digital images can be provided. With the proper fees and permissions, many images can be used in commercial and non-profit applications.

For personal and commercial uses of the Library's images, the Library will send to the user a Commercial Use Agreement which states access rights to images and copyright restrictions. This agreement must be returned to the library before the order will be processed. It will also state proper credit to be used for the product whenever photographs are used in commercial or non-profit situations. Further information regarding Use and Reproduction may be found on the Library's website: <https://tessa.lapl.org/special-collections-ordering>.

#### Access Restrictions

This archive is open for research by appointment only in the Rare Books Room. Information about setting appointments can be found on the Library's website at [lapl.org/branches/rarebooks](http://lapl.org/branches/rarebooks). Appointments can also be arranged by sending an email inquiry to [rarebook \[at\] lapl.org](mailto:rarebook@lapl.org).

#### Provenance/ Source of Acquisition

Donated to the Los Angeles Public Library by Lydia R. Otero in August 2023. The librarians in the Digitization and Special Collections Department first learned about Otero when Todd Lerew, Director of Special Projects, Library Foundation of Los Angeles, shared an article published in "High Country News" in March 2022, titled "My Archive: 20 Years of Los Angeles' LGBTQ+ Community." A letter of interest was sent to Otero from Ani Boyadjian, Research & Special Collections Manager, on February 15, 2023, which initiated correspondence and several meetings. Lydia wrote in an email on February 21, 2023, "...Central Library holds a special place in my heart. One, I spent my summers in LA as a child and spent many hours there with my mother. Second, I worked there for several months as an electrician after the 1986 fire."

#### Preferred Citation

[Item], Lydia R. Otero Archive. Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections.

#### Related Materials:

Irene Martinez and Laura Duran Archive. Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections.

David Gonzales Collection. Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections.

[Louis Jacinto Collection, 1976–2008](#)

“L.A. Interchanges: A Brown & Queer Archival Memoir” (2023) by Lydia R. Otero (call no. 306.7662092 O87-1)

“In the Shadows of the Freeway: Growing Up Brown & Queer” (2019) by Lydia R. Otero (call no. 06.7662092 O87)

“La Calle: Spatial Conflicts and Urban Renewal in a Southwest City” (2010) by Lydia R. Otero (call no. 323.35209791 O87)

#### Items Removed:

Two books written by Estilita Grimaldo titled “Sela” (2020) and “Wake Up!” (2019) were removed from the archive, cataloged and added to Rare Books.

### **PROCESSING INFORMATION**

Archival processing was completed at the Los Angeles Public Library by Rosemarie Knopka, Librarian Archivist, in December 2023. Juan Avalos, an Administrative Clerk in the Digitization and Special Collections Department, assisted in processing the archive.

### **ARRANGEMENT**

Materials are arranged chronologically within folders by date of creation.

The materials are organized in the following series:

Series 1: Education

Series 2: L.G.B.T.Q. Activism

Series 3: “L.A. Interchanges” Book Research

Series 4: Audiovisual

Series 5: Objects

Series 6: Photographs

Series 7: Oversize Materials

### **INDEXING TERMS**

The Los Angeles Public Library used both Library of Congress Subject Headings and the Library of Congress Thesaurus for Graphic Materials (TGM) as sources for subject headings for cataloging. In addition, TGM was used for genre and format terms.

#### Topics:

Activism, LGBTQIA+

Activism, Queer.

Activism–United States.

Civil rights–California–Los Angeles.

GLLU

Gay and lesbian rights.

Gay and lesbian movement.

Gay and lesbian studies.

Gay and lesbian writers.

Latinos (United States).

Lesbians.

Lesbians–Archives.

Lesbians–California–Los Angeles.

Lesbians–California–Los Angeles–Social conditions.

Lesbians–History–20th century.

Lesbians–Political activity.

Lesbians–Social networks.

Non-binary identity.

Non-binary people.

Persons:

Otero, Lydia R.

#### GENRE / FORMAT

Audiovisual

Correspondence

Periodicals

Photographs

Posters

T-shirts

#### **CONTAINER LIST**

Hollinger Standard Record Storage Cartons (2 boxes, SRSCDL)

Oversize Document Box (1 box, DF1824)

Series 1: Education

*Box : Folder      Description*

1 : 1      California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA), 1973-98

File contains college transcripts for Lydia Otero, a resume, class papers, and correspondence.

1 : 2      Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship, 1986

File contains a portfolio with a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship awarded to Lydia Otero by the State of California, Department of Industrial Relations, California Apprenticeship Council in November 1986.

Series 2: L.G.B.T.Q. Activism

*Box : Folder      Description*

1 : 3      ACT-UP Newsletter, 1988

File contains an ACT-Up Los Angeles newsletter dated April/May 1988. It includes articles about the impact of AIDS on people of color, and the Latino community.

1 : 4      Bienestar, 1988-92

File contains brochures, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, budget information and correspondence. In 1989, Otero's second year as president, GLLU launched Bienestar: A Gay Latino AIDS Project. The organization grew to operate seven community centers across LA County and continues to focus on emerging health issues faced by Latinx and LGBTQ populations.

1 : 5      Bienestar - Funding Proposal to L.A. County, 1990

File contains a funding proposal to the Department of Health Services for the development of educational and prevention materials on HIV/AIDS for gay and bisexual Latino men.

1 : 6      Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders, 1986

File contains a flyer for a candlelight vigil for victims of a serial murderer in South Los Angeles, as well as correspondence and a written statement about attendance at the vigil.

1 : 7      Commendations and Diploma, 1990-94

File contains commendations received by Lydia Otero from the City of Los Angeles, 1990; UCLA Undergraduate President's Lesbian and Gay Task Force, 1990; a certificate of attendance for completion of a four-day conference and education workshops at Conferencia Binacional sobre SIDA, 1990; a diploma for a Bachelor of Arts degree from California State University, Los Angeles, 1992; Lesbianas Unidas of GLLU Aida Pineda Award for Outstanding Achievement, 1993; and Los Angeles Community College District Certificate of Completion for a teaching internship with Project MATCH, 1994.

1 : 8      The Commitment to Feminism Award, 1990

File contains a Commitment to Feminism award presented to Lydia Otero by the Sunset Junction 1990 Street Fair.

1 : 9      Connexus Women's Center, 1984

File contains correspondence between Members of GLLU and a Women's Center in Manhattan Beach on the subject of inclusivity.

1 : 10      Ephemera, 1981-82

File contains brochures for 2nd National 3rd World Lesbian/Gay Conference, 1981; Whitman-Brooks Horizons '82; and Third World Counselors Association, 1984.

1 : 11      Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU) - Awards and Anniversary Dinners, 1985-90

File contains programs, flyers, invitations, correspondence, and reservation cards.

1 : 12      Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU) - Latinas Only Policy, 1985

File contains correspondence related to the policy to keep retreats for lesbians to Latina participants only.

- 1 : 13 Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU) - Mailing List, 1985  
File contains memos related to conference planning, flyers, and a schedule for the conference "Joining Our Struggles; Making Our Future" the International Lesbian & Gay People of Color Conference 1986.
- 1 : 14 Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU) - Misc., 1989  
File contains business cards, correspondence, a newsletter, letterhead paper, and a schedule for the 1991 Creating Change West, a conference for Lesbian and Gay Californians.
- 1 : 15 Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU) - Press, 1988-90  
File contains newspapers with GLLU coverage: "The News," "Los Angeles Times," and "Vanguard."
- 1 : 16 Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU) - Cinco de Mayo Fiesta with El Vez, 1991  
File contains a newspaper advertisement published in "Edge" for the Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos Cinco de Mayo Fiesta featuring a performance by El Vez.
- 1 : 17 Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU) - UNIDAD Newsletters, 1983-92  
File contains issues of GLLU UNIDAD newsletters.
- 1 : 18 Lesbianas Latin Americanas, 1979  
File contains a business card, brochures, handwritten notes, committee, workshop and conference documents, and a program for a Cal State Long Beach event Dia de la Mujer/Day of the Woman.
- 1 : 19 Lesbianas Unidas (LU) - Retreat, 1987  
File contains conference committee planning documents.
- 1 : 20 Lesbianas Unidas (LU) - Sunset Junction Cut-a-Thon, 1987  
File contains hair stylists' business cards, and information about the fundraising "Cut-A-Thon" for the Primer Encuentro de Lesbianas Feministas de Latinoamérica y el Caribe conference.
- 1 : 21 Lesbianas Unidas (LU) - Encuentro, 1987-89  
File contains Lesbianas Unidas documents about fundraising for the First National Latina Lesbian Conference.
- 1 : 22 Lesbianas Unidas (LU) - First Latina Lesbian Retreat, 1984-85  
File contains a meeting agenda, a mock-up of a flyer, and a newsletter.
- 1 : 23 Lesbianas Unidas (LU) - Misc., 1985-88  
File contains flyers, and a brochure.
- 1 : 24 Lesbianas Unidas (LU) - GLLU Split, 1993-94  
File contains correspondence and meeting minutes related to LU becoming its own non-profit organization apart from Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU).
- 1 : 25 Periodicals, 1986-2022  
File contains an issue of "Tradeswomen: A Quarterly Magazine for Women in Blue-Collar Work from Fall 1986," and "High Country News, the Archives Issue," from April 2022, which includes the article "Here and Queer: A Personal Archive of LGBTQ+ Activism, Los Angeles, 1978-1998" by Lydia Otero.

1 : 26 Personal, 1985-2022

File contains a flyer for Lydia and Geneva's birthday party from 1985, a summary of Lydia's 1987 calendar, a letter to Lydia from Gloria Molina dated Dec. 27, 1990 and April 2, 1991; a wedding invitation from Shirl Buss from 1993; and a screening program for "UNIDAD" from 2023.

1 : 27 Souvenirs from Mexico, 1973-84

File contains an embroidered decoration, a greeting card with a photograph of a message painted on a wall, "sin la participación de la mujer no hay revolución," and a guide to Teotihuacan dated 1973.

1 : 28 U.S. Conference of Mayors Funding Proposal, 1989

File contains a GLLU proposal to the U.S. Conference of Mayors for funding to present six Bienestar seminars.

Series 3: "L.A. Interchanges" Book Research

*Box : Folder Description*

1 : 29 Miscellaneous, 2020-22

File contains correspondence with David Gonzales, printouts of articles from the internet, and photocopied pages from books.

1 : 30 Miscellaneous, 2021

File contains a list of dates from Otero's 1987 calendar, printed articles and book excerpts, and Claremont Graduate University student Alice Y. Hom's 2011 dissertation titled "Unifying Differences: Lesbian of Color Community Building in Los Angeles and New York, 1970s-1980s."

1 : 31 Encuentro, 2022-23

File contains photocopies of journal articles from titles including "Third Woman: The Sexuality of Latinas," "Off Our Backs: A Woman's News Journal," and "Connexions: An International Women's Quarterly."

1 : 32 HIV/AIDS, 2021-23

File contains printouts of newspaper articles written between 1985-92.

1 : 33 The Lesbian News, undated

File contains photocopies of articles from the journal "Lesbian News" dated from 1978-91.

1 : 34 Lesbianas Unidas (LU) and LALAs, 2021

File contains newspaper and journal articles dated 1979-89.

1 : 35 Minority AIDS Project (MAP) and Rev. Carl Beane, 2021-23

File contains a project timeline, printouts of newspaper articles dated 1985-90.

1 : 36 Notes, 2023

File contains handwritten notes about the book's title, cover design, and contents.

1 : 37 ONE Archive, 2022

File contains printouts Lydia took with their iPhone of the archive, including boxes, files, and archival materials from the Lesbianas Unidas, Lesbians of Color - L.A., Latinos, and Latinas files.

1 : 38 Queer Nightlife, 2021-23

File contains printouts from "L.A. Weekly" dance clubs and nightlife listings from 1981-85.

1 : 39 Conclusion, 2022-23

File contains printouts of articles, and email correspondence with Ani Boyadjian at the Central Library of the Los Angeles Public Library.

#### Series 4: Audiovisual

*Box : Folder Description*

2 : 1 LGBTQ Interviews, 1991-2009

File contains interviews with Torie Osborn and Luz Calvo from the Waging the Battle Against HIV/AIDS in Los Angeles research study from 2009 on four discs and two Mini DV cassettes. There is also a disc titled L.U. Retreat, 1991.

2 : 2 Central Library Book Talk with Lydia R. Otero, 2023

File contains a recording by Rita Gonzales of "Unsilencing Narratives: Amplifying Queer Archives" book talk with Lydia R. Otero on July 30, 2023 on a SanDisk Ultra Plus SD Memory Card. A viewing copy is also available on the department Google drive.

#### Series 5: Objects

*Box : Folder Description*

2 : 3 Pins, 1986-91 (3 pins)

File contains the following button pins: Asians and Pacific Islanders for Jesse Jackson '88; Viva, viva Gloria Molina, County Supervisor, 1991; and ILGPOCC, 1986.

2 : 4 Planners, 1987-92 (5 notebooks)

File contains Lydia Otero's week at a glance planners for the years 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1992.

2 : 5 Planners, 2011-13 (3 notebooks)

File contains Lydia Otero's monthly planners for the years 2011, 2012, and 2013.

2 : 6 National Lesbians of Color Conference; Women in the Trades Conference T-shirts, 1983

File contains a blue sleeveless t-shirt with black graphics and text reading 1983 National L.O.C. Conference - Sisters Bonding, 1983, and an order form. File also contains a pink t-shirt with black text reading Women in the Trades Conference, 1983.

2 : 7 GLLU T-shirt, c.1986

File contains a blue G.L.L.U. Los Angeles t-shirt with green and red graphics designed by Lydia Otero on an early Macintosh computer around 1986.



2 : 8 MalintZINE T-shirt, 2019

File contains a white 'MalintZINE, MAS y Mas' t-shirt with a black printed graphic from a Show & Tell series presented by the UA Confluencercenter for Creative Inquiry, which was held at Petroglyphs in downtown Tucson, AZ, in 2019. The event was hosted by emcee Lydia Otero, Associate Professor in the UA's Department of Mexican American Studies.

2 : 9 Cooper Do-nuts/Nancy Valverde Square T-shirt, 2023

File contains a black t-shirt with yellow, purple and pink graphics depicting a portrait of Nancy Valverde and text reading Cooper Do-nuts Nancy Valverde Square, June 24, 2023. In June 2023, a motion proposed by the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC) for ceremonial signage at the intersection of 2nd and Main Streets in Downtown LA to be known as "Cooper Do-nuts/Nancy Valverde Square" received full Los Angeles City Council approval, and the t-shirt commemorates the dedication.

Series 6: Photographs

*Box : Folder Description*

2 : 10 Aguilar, Laura, 1987 (33 slides)

File contains slides given to Lydia Otero by Laura Aguilar. Aguilar took the photographs at the 1987 Encuentro in Mexico City. Aguilar made several prints from the slides. The images include candid group shots and portraits of the participants.

2 : 11 Aguilar, Laura, undated (6 items)

File contains postcards and cards with photographs of Otero at a desk and with a guitar taken by Aguilar.

2 : 12 Ibarra, Rosario, 1986 (1 slide)

File contains one color slide of a portrait of Lydia Otero and Rosario Ibarra. Otero met Rosario in Mexico City in 1986 as part of the Mujer a Mujer program.

2 : 13 Jacinto, Louis, 1981-85 (36 photographs)

File contains copies of photographs by Louis Jacinto; most appeared in the documentary "UNIDAD" (2022). Includes Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU) social events and marches.

2 : 14 Jacinto, Louis, 1986-93 (36 photographs)

File contains copies of photographs by Louis Jacinto; most appeared in the documentary "UNIDAD" (2022). Includes Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos (GLLU) social events and marches.

2 : 15 Otero, Lydia R. and Irene Martinez, 1980-2022 (27 photographs)

File contains photos printed from Lydia's hard drive of L.U. retreats, Pride parades, an LOC conference, a trip to New Mexico, and the "UNIDAD" (2022) premier. Photographs by Lydia R. Otero and Irene Martinez.

2 : 16 Otero, Lydia R. - "L.A. Interchanges," 1955-2023 (37 photographs)

File contains copies of photos related to and appearing in the book "L.A. Interchanges" (2023) by Lydia R. Otero.

2 : 17 Villaseñor, Becky, undated (3 contact sheets)

File contains a contact sheet that was printed in the "High Country News" article written by Lydia Otero. The photographs are of a conference including speakers, group portraits, and a meeting room at Sheraton-Town House in Los Angeles.

Series 7: Oversize Materials

*Box : Folder      Description*

3 : 1      Periodicals, 1988-90

File contains four issues of L.A. Weekly with cover stories and articles on gay and lesbian themes, including "The History of AIDS in L.A." and "Family Among Strangers" by Doug Sadownick, and "Only Connect" by Robin Podolsky.

3 : 2      Periodicals, 1990

File contains issues of "Frontiers" and "L.A. Style" with Latinx-themed cover stories.

3 : 3      Posters, 1986

File contains four posters from 1986 that Otero picked up in Mexico City that hung on the wall of their home, including images of female soldiers in the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), a poster for Del Sindicato de Costureras, and a poster for an event at Plaza de Toros de Palma de Mallorca.

3 : 4      Posters, 1986-98

File contains a signed Rosario Ibarra poster, 1986; an Americas 2001 United Farm Workers poster; a photo print of a mural; a GLLU Cinco de Mayo poster for an event featuring El Vez, 1991; and a Sylvester poster, 1998.