

Fundación 26
de diciembre
Centro
Comunitario
de Mayores
LGTBIQ+





Constellation
of the Commons

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**Federico Armenteros
and Víctor Mora**

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Who are you and what is your relationship with the Foundation?

Federico: My name is Federico Armenteros. I am a social educator and founder of where we are, in the Foundation of the 26th of December, in Madrid. I arrived on this path because of my profession and also because of the state of my sexual orientation, which has brought me where it has brought me, which we will go into later.

Víctor: I am Víctor Mora. I am the director of the area of Formation And Investigation in the Foundation of the 26th of December. I am a historical investigator, specializing in the memory of sexual orientations in Spain.

Federico, how did you come up with the idea to organize a foundation for older LGBTQ+ people?

Federico: This idea came to be at a time when I had already “come out of the closet.” A wonderful moment in my life, a second adolescence, at the age of 40, was to return to a sexuality that I had repressed for so long. I was an activist or I was already starting to be one, so, all that I had not been able to do before, I turned to it. I was in the organization Cogam, which was the Madrid-based organization of LGTB people, and the person who is now the general director of the Ministry of Equality said to me: “Federico, you have to dedicate yourself to the elderly”. I thought she was calling me old, me, 40 years old.

I felt very bad because at that time I was an activist and, being an educator, we went to high schools and it was great fun. We had a great time because, even though it was the 2000s, it was a very serious struggle, we would go hand in hand, we would kiss each other and there was a lot of resistance. The teachers didn't come into the classroom when we came in. I told them: “but you have to see what we are saying.” I felt comfortable there because I was a transgressor, and this person comes and tells me that I had to dedicate myself to old people.

And that's what planted a seed that began to germinate. So the whole thing began in the Canary Islands. I was in playa del íngles in November, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month at 11:00AM. I was lying there and I saw an old man walking with a walker, naked. And I said to myself, “it can't be.” So I, with my eagerness for gossip, which is now called “active listening” went to see who it was. I found out he was an elderly German gentleman, who must've been more than 80 years old. And, look, how Nordic culture instills autonomy, in Latin culture they wouldn't have left me free to do that, they lock us up if we do that at 80. So I thought that this had to be changed. And the idea started to come. I started to ask myself “where are the elders?” That was what motivated me to



ask, to see, to investigate. What moved me the most was that many older people have said “well, I am ready to commit suicide” and I say “no way, this story can't end like this. We'll have to do something.” And that was the reason. That and the fact I was at the gates of old age, and [I said to myself] “this has to be changed.” We can't go on not seeing this reality and we have to act. So that's where it started.

The foundation came to be in 2011 in Madrid's Chueca neighborhood?

Federico: It officially started in 2010, but before that there was the work of thinking about the need for a space, because there was none. Chueca was not built with memory in mind, it was built for the future. In doing so, history was also forgotten. We stopped talking about “faggots,” now we were gays. Because we were faggots all our lives. I have never been called gay. In Chueca there were many saunas, pubs, discos, except for the lesbians who opened a bookstore. Look, we were all about sex, and all about exploiting your body. The image of gay men as young, beautiful, consuming bodies. So of course I was shocked. I said to myself, “It can't be that they are commercializing history so much.” When I start to ask myself about my own history, [I say to myself] “if there was a law, if there was something, how come this is not talked about?” Everything was talking about a famous gay man named Zerolo, about equal marriage... but to get here, there had to be something. And I look up “Redada de Violetas”, the first book where I read a little bit about this situation but there's not much information and I'm shocked. Then I read “The Whip and the Pen” and I say to myself, “and who is telling this, where is it? In a book that nobody reads?” Because it was all a question of consumption, I realized that the fight was not about that.

When we mention the LGTBIQ+ collective, what lived realities are we referring to?

Victor: We are talking about the group of non-normative sexualities and gender identities: lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans (transsexuals, transgender, transvestites). Currently, we are talking about expanding, because the spectrum turns out to be very large and diversity is growing. There is the asexual spectrum, there is the pansexual spectrum. There are new dimensions of sexuality and gender, and it turns out that we have very little binary, and that there is very little of this normative tradition in our bodies, which are diverse and relate to each other in many ways. And of course, we are talking about a generation that is the first generation that is aware of it as a collective and that is now older.

I like to say what Paquita Salas's grandmother says, “faggots have been around all our lives; faggots, there have been in all of human history.” But the notion that we are a collective, that we have political agency, that we can change things in relation to civil rights, comes from a leading generation that is now older. There has never been any discussion of what that old age is like, what aging for people in the collective is like. So, we are finding that there are some people with very particular needs by virtue that they belong to the collective and have had that history.

Federico, how does this center respond to the realities of elderly members of the LGBTQ+ collective?

Federico: The center responds by adapting to their needs. First it does it in a participatory way, asking: “what do you need?” not from the halo of science, but by working “with” the elderly. And in the beginning, what we moved into initially was a residential building. But, it failed because it was a vision

based more in my needs than from a more objective and collective need. I had a vision of the Chueca neighborhood, that the people in the collective were very rich, that we had a lot of money, but that was not the case.

So, the radical change was to create spaces in order for the people to participate because there were none. The residency, I thought, will come, it will be built. For me the first step was to generate those spaces, because the elderly could not be in Chueca because there were only discos and they started at one o'clock in the morning. And they didn't have the money to spend all day in the pub either. I often went to Puerta del Sol, where all the elderly people were waiting and watching people go by, and they said "what I want is to have a place to have coffee and chat." Then the center opened, the first community center in Lavapiés LGTB.

Is it the only center in Spain or are there other centers like it?

Federico: It was the first to be opened for this purpose. In Barcelona there is another foundation, which opened two years before us and with a different vision. But in the statutes it seemed that we had copied them without knowing it. They focus on the issue of raising awareness, working for a systemic change. We believe that for this systemic change to take place, there must be people's involvement, because if not, it is not lasting. So this is the first center for the active involvement of the elderly.

At the beginning, of course, you have to educate. People of those generations were not educated to participate. Franco had taken care of that. They were told: "don't get into trouble, don't get involved in politics, shut up"; this was said to the whole population, not only to LGBTQ+ people. The older collective has not participated, and we had to educate them to participate and tell them that participating is good, it is healthy; that participating helps you and you can help others. Because at the beginning they came with the mentality of the user, and I told them that they were not beneficiaries but participants. It was all about working with them to change their mentality so that they would see the need to get involved, that we need to know what we want to build. It's not about "what do you build for me?" but "what do we all want to build together?"

Why did you choose the legal formula of the Foundation for this initiative?

Federico: How it is done also depends on each country. Here in Spain, I had completed a master's degree in Management of Social Service Centers and I was also familiar with activism, so I saw that an association was out of the question. The association has its positive sides, which is that it's participatory. But, like democracy, it has been severely manipulated in the past. In the end it is a few who decide and then they can use or not the majorities. But majorities are not active participants, but once a year I introduce you or I tell you, but in the meantime "I do".

I thought about a company but I was poor and I could not put together a company, because you had to invest 3,000 € to register a service company. On the other hand, if I founded a company, I would also be in contradiction with respect to this participatory element. Although, well, I also think that companies should be democratized, that there are also democratic companies, but it would have been a great shock. In addition to a change of mentality, it was also necessary to explain to them "I am a businessman, but I am a "good businessman", participatory, and that would break many schemes.

Another formula was that of foundations. Because foundations already have a long history, they have state, regional and local recognition, as well as that of the people. People understand what it is when you talk about a foundation. In foundations it is the board of trustees who governs, and then you had to have 30,000 €. That is one of the handicaps that slows you down when you start, unless you have a lot of money. If you have a net worth of 1 million euros there is no problem. And that is also very controlled. I liked it better because there is state control and exhaustive control of the accounts, of what you do. This implies a more political, more state level, more real, more political level for the partners. It is people who do not know you at all and who inspect you and remind you: "you have said this and it has to be this". It gives you more peace of mind to be a Foundation. So, I looked at those three formulas and I believe that the Foundation was more viable and had a better track record. Because in an association you can kill yourself, and that often happens, and then they throw you out, they throw you away like a handkerchief. I am one of those people who say: "this has to grow, it is not mine, I do not own it. My function is to plant so that it can continue. Then I will have to do other things, or I will die, because we will have to die sometime".

Federico, did you receive help, subsidies and support from any institutions to set up this Foundation?

Federico: No. And I also liked it that way. It has its upside and its downside. If we had been born under the protection of a political party, or of a company, or of someone, that would have been doomed. You had all the cards on the table. Were they going to support you? Of course they were going to support you. There are many foundations that belong to the church and look, they rise like cream to the top. There are many that belong to banks. They go up like crazy. Or political parties that, while that party is in government or in power, support you. But the moment the opposition passes, they sink you.

Victor: Always conditional, of course. And that is also very risky. What does not detract from the fact that later, with time, there has been recognition. When there has been a long road already traveled, then there is a certain recognition. Well, the point is that a foundation also comes to cover precisely something that the institution does not cover, or that the institutional power, let's say, does not cover. There is something that has been left aside and that is the role of the Foundation, to cover these issues.

Federico: Because of this too, the risk and the effort when nobody knows you and everybody asks you: "Who are you? Whose are you? And you answer, "I am me". That has been hard. We have been on the road for 13 years with the foundation and with a lot of effort. We have not had that support, from those who tell you "relax, we are here and this is a need that has to be covered".

Do people who participate in your activities pay a fee?

Federico: For associations they do, there is a fee that you have to pay to become a member and you are preferential for the activities, or exclusive for those activities. Foundations do not. We are of general interest and we are recognized as being of general interest. We have to take care of everybody. That's also why I made the foundation. But people think "no, but I want to be a member". You can't be a member of a foundation. Yes, we put it in the statutes: "collaborating members," they are collaborating members who have a voice, but no vote. But they can collaborate economically in this situation. From there, we also try to keep them informed, to

inform them of the Foundation's activities, but to change a little the organization of the service option that the Foundation makes. The Foundation cannot say "we are going to vote on whether we serve the elderly or not serve the elderly." That's outside [the possibilities], that's why it wasn't conceived as a partnership.

If no fees are paid, how are the Center's activities financed?

Federico: Here, this has to do with all the policies that the Foundation must follow in order to seek those funds. We are allowed to seek out these funds. The figure of the President in our statutes, is able to seek both private and public funds: subsidies, donations, but not with fees. The same applies to the Board of Trustees. In other foundations they charge you for being a trustee, because you have all the responsibility of command, it is like the Board of Directors. In the Board of Trustees you vote, but depending on your economic participation. Here, we try not to do that, because otherwise nobody would have joined. Nobody would have donated, I would have been left alone with my husband. So if that is the case then why a foundation? Because it is easier to access private and public funds. Because you are an organized civil organization. You are not the madman on the hill or the visionary who sees the promised land. You have responsibilities, that is to say, there is the Penal Code, the Civil Code, the Administrative Code. So you have all that behind that organization.

Do you feel that you are solving a problem that should be addressed institutionally within a welfare state?

Victor: The 26D Foundation is subject to its own programs and we have intervention programs, home care programs, as well as many programs that are offered precisely to cover what is not covered.

Federico: Exactly, because if that were addressed, we would disappear. We would not have any function, because the most statutory function is for that reason. We would disappear the moment the institutions attend to the collective.

Demographically speaking, what is the profile of the people who participate in this Foundation?

Victor: The profiles of the people that come to the Foundation are very diverse. Starting from the premise that in some reports, in some spaces of social analysis, an older person for us is considered to be someone from the LGTB collective who is 50 years old or older. That seems very narrow to us, but of course, my 50s are not the same, since I was born in 81, as a person who in the 80s was living the most serious scourge of the crisis, what has been called the AIDS crisis, for example.

This so-called minority stress produces, or can produce, accelerated aging, or sometimes we find that people come to the Foundation that clinical cases of advanced deterioration, which is not usual in people who do not belong to the group, when we are talking about this generation, the generation that is older now and who were young in the 70s and 80s, their activism, or not their activism those who simply wanted to survive, right? So, we find people who have had a very complicated working life, or have not had a regular or normal recognized working life, and now have non-contributory pensions, or are in a very complicated situation on the street, in a situation of zero contact with their families, because of these kinds of issues. So these are emergency situations that need to be attended to. This, for example, is a profile.

There are also people in the volunteer group who are elderly too, or are considered elderly, and they have wonderful life stories. I want to make this clear because yes, of course we are addressing needs that are not being met and are calling attention to realities that are largely invisible. Boti was right when she told you “hey, this is not being addressed by anyone and we have to start to look after the aging of the community.”

But most of the stories that we have at the foundation of reunion with the community, of happiness, of recognizing oneself, of sharing amongst equals. They are very, very cool and precious stories that we have here. We also want to move away a little bit from this narrative of always, continually re-victimizing. The fact that there are special needs does not mean that we are talking about passive victims, far from it, but that the lack of spaces and ageism, even within the group itself, has been expelling people who have been aging from certain spaces, and that in reality it is about providing this space so that there can be community again. The profiles are very diverse, but we do find that the most interesting stories are the stories of solidarity, which occur between the volunteers themselves and the foundation’s participants.

Those of us who dedicate ourselves to cultural criticism usually denounce a lack of historical memory in relation to the crimes committed during Franco’s dictatorship against anyone who disagreed with the dictates of the regime. How did homosexuals, and lesbians experience this period of history?

Federico: I can speak for myself. When I was little, it was a feeling of not belonging. You realized, very quickly, that this world, or the world you lived in, was not pleasant. You were a persona-non-grata, they told you that all the time. I remember, I was four years old, and that’s when my uncle told me. I have an uncle who comes from Holland, he was an emigrant and he used to come at Christmas and bring us toys. And he brought my brother a car and he wrapped the present for me. “Your present.” I opened it and it was a doll. And he takes it from me and he yells, “faggot” and throws it on top of the closet.

I understand that they did it to “correct,” because that was what they used to do. You had to “correct” because if you didn’t end up being sick, you ended up in jail, and you were a sinner all your life. Everything touched us. That is what was impressed upon me. I couldn’t talk to anyone. But thinking about the stories we collect here at the Foundation, I realize that I was privileged. Because when I was 17 or 18 years old, the “Social Danger Law” was repealed. I had lived for 18 years with the Law of Vagrants and Malingerers and then with the Law of Social Dangerousness. But those who were already in their adulthood, childhood, and youth with the Franco regime, suffered something crushing. Although later you find many versions.

There you find that Francoism was also very classist. There are those who had money and tell you: “oh, but you complain about vice”. And I say: “What do you mean, we are complaining about vice?” Your father sent you to England, or sent you to the United States so they wouldn’t put you in jail, or so they wouldn’t beat you up. Others say, “Well, I used to fuck a lot. I was divine.” Sure. It was more classism. The poorest people were the ones that Francoism crushed the most. They were the ones who went to jail, who were continuously arrested, who were extorted, and so on. Franco did what was to be expected. They were not little sisters of charity.

Did Franco's repression affect men and women equally?

Víctor: No. Certainly not. Francoism was a very long dictatorship. Franco was a very astute politician. He knew very well how to stay in power, changing certain issues, at the international level, in order to have more and more support. He started with the support of the Vatican, which was the first European country to support fascism after Hitler's death. So, that has a series of conditions. This has to go hand in hand with a change in education, with a change in the global culture, and then what is called National Catholicism begins. This amalgam of rancid patriotic values and an extreme, very extremist, and very radical Catholicism. In this sense, in spite of the fact that Franco changed certain things in international politics to stay in power, and he did it very well, there was a device for controlling the population that was maintained throughout the dictatorship, which was gender and sex. That is maintained and is very rigid and very significant, and it acts in a different way.

As Federico has said, the Francoist justice system was absolutely corrupt. Then, the wealthy and bourgeois class, people with money were not subjected to the same conditions as the working or marginal working class, or the lumpen proletariat. We know this from the testimonies we have of the Law of Vagos y Maleantes and Social Danger. The poet Jaime Gil de Biedma himself, who belonged to the aristocracy, spent a night in the dungeon when there was a raid and they went to his house. But if you were not of that social class, most likely you could be locked up for three or five years. Then there was exile. You couldn't go back to your town, you had to spend another five years living somewhere else. You could no longer have access to certain jobs, if you had been convicted under the Dangerousness Law.

It is true that the Vagos y Maleantes Law, or its modernization, which is the Dangerousness Law, but which in reality is the same law, is a preventive criminal law, which deals with the persecution of identities, so to speak. So it is assumed that the socially dangerous are going to commit a crime and before they commit it, they are already imprisoned. It is true that the Dangerousness Law increases arrests by 700%, 700%. Lesbian women were not included as subjects to be prosecuted by the law, but because they were not considered, women in general, as subjects. They were objects, they were complements to men. So, they were not taken into account. What happens is that we also know from testimonies that the persecution of deviant women went somewhere else. It went through the patronage, it went through the psychiatric hospitals run by nuns, it went through convents, it went through other places that have not left a trace in the archives. So it is difficult to investigate. But it does not mean that it did not happen.

When it is said that "women did not have it so complicated" it is false because they had it very complicated, it is just that it is difficult to trace. We know this from the testimonies. Here at the Foundation we have had participants who have told us about their persecution. It always began in the family itself, the first coercion, as in the case of Federico. And in the case of women it went through places that leave no documentary trace, but that does not mean that it did not happen.

What testimonies and documentation exist of the history of mistreatment suffered by all these people during the dictatorship?

Federico: We thought, when we called ourselves 26D (December 26), that we had to take care of our historical memory. We have asked the Ministry that we

want to have the archives of the Vagos y Maleantes and Social Dangerousness Law. They are there in Alcalá, very sealed. Research is only allowed when it is a university or thesis topic. But we have not yet gained access and it is really one of the important elements that we want to show. Some people have come to me with the documents of their convictions and reading what they said was an impressive experience. And they regarded that document as a treasure. It was the proof of how they had been crushed, they said "look what they said about me."

Victor: Of course. They are very delicate documents because they talk about personal issues that have greatly marked the lives of these people, maybe that has prevented them from accessing jobs or has meant a break with their families. Yes, they are sensitive documents, that is true. It is also true that, well, why is it called the December 26th Foundation? Because on December 26, 1978 homosexuality was decriminalized, it was no longer illegal to be homosexual in Spain. This does not mean that the persecution ended, because there were still other laws, there was still the Public Scandal Law that lasted until the end of the 80s. And then it is not that everything changes because a law disappears, we already know that; society does not change because we put up a flag. Not at all. There was still a lot to be done, but it is true that another path was opened.

In the late 90's, in the early 2000's, there began to be more research on the subject, but it is true that it is research done by the activists themselves because this is not considered within the field of history, within the study of hegemonic history, let's say, as something noteworthy. Now it is different, but at the beginning, at the congresses it was at the miscellaneous table, a table of those of you who do your own little things, there we put them all together. Because of the Data Protection Law, you cannot access certain archives until 70 years have passed. When we held in 2018 the December 26th Foundation Conference, the first conference we did on memory, research and experiences, it was done for the 40th anniversary of decriminalization and we mixed what was academic research with testimonies of people, women and men, who wanted to participate and tell their story and mix in. What happens? That the archives can be consulted, but nothing can be extracted from there, because of data protection. Which is a rather ambivalent thing because it goes by communities. In Barcelona, for example, researchers have been able to access the files of dangerousness and have made books with them and have brought it to light and it is something that helps a lot to make the issue visible. It is true that not everything is in the archives. Yes, it is important to rescue the documents generated by this law. It is important to bring them to light, to know what things were said, to do something with them, to re-signify them in addition to commemorating this memory. But it is also true that other things must be rescued, because there was also a clandestine life, there were also wonderful love stories, there were also secret communication codes that were also very interesting and that are not in any document. So this is collected through interviews, through testimonies, and through the fact that the people who participated at that time are in a safe space and want to share it and generate these dialogues.

You mentioned that during Franco's regime, families, in general, were spaces of penalization, denunciation and surveillance for the human development of people in this group [LGBT+], what public and private spaces existed for the development of a non-heteronormative way of life?

Federico: We had to look for hidden and dark places. We were condemned to think that what was ours was "dirty," that it was not allowed and that you had to make a

living and hide. The positive part of this is that there were spaces where we had sex and no one knew about it. There was a famous subway line, line two, and depending on where you went, you could pick up people there. In other words, there was a whole world of resistance, like saying “well, they crush us, they put us in the dark,” but there were people who said “they don’t put me in the dark, I’m going to be totally visible.” And they were very resilient people in that sense, but then they were punished hard and this inflamed them even more. These were the first people who came to the Foundation. I called them “Las Rocieras”, because they took advantage of the dust of the Rocío. The “capillitas” in Andalusia, they were all involved there.

We took advantage of where we could be and where we were less affected. I used to say “but I don’t like the Feria del Rocío, how can I go to the Rocío,” and they told me not to miss it. It was the greatest thing about the Rocío. They were the people who had been transformers. They told us their stories and you were amazed. It was a life they lived at that time with a lot of courage. If the dictatorship told them that they couldn’t wear a skirt, they wore it; that they couldn’t wear a wig, they wore it; that they couldn’t smoke, they smoked, that they couldn’t drink, they drank. You had to be a rebel to understand...

You mentioned the courage of those who chose to expose themselves publicly to claim their “right to be” in the midst of Franco’s dictatorship. How were people who exposed themselves publicly and continuously confronted the heteronormative authority imposed by the regime received within the collective itself?

Federico: The worst thing is to see how the minority that wanted to go unnoticed crushed those people within the collective itself because they told them: “we are like this because of you.” This group of people who wanted to go unnoticed said: “You, by being visible, by trying to be visible, you are hurting the rest of us.” There was a whole struggle in that sense.

Victor: And it is still unresolved. Besides, it’s what you were saying at the beginning, “I’ve never been gay, I’ve always been queer.” This is the unresolved debate between assimilation and transgression, which takes on a different name each era, but right now it is still happening. In the 70s it happened, and in Spain it was called the “Crazy Debate”. The crazy women, the transvestites, the queers with feathers, the super masculine women: “no, you to the back of the line, because what we want is to integrate and to integrate we have to emulate the norm as much as possible.” And the norm is the binary gender normativity, with the “passing,” as they say now, as the most important thing possible.

But these trans women, these transvestites and these queers who rebelled, what you were saying, in these spaces and who created spaces of resistance all over the city, were rebelling against this idea that we had to associate our sexuality with shame. They were saying, “I rebel against that and I have a life because life always slips away.” So that’s what we have to claim, that the LGTB struggle, the feminist struggle, is not complete without these people who say, “no, no, it’s that in the face of this pretension of having everything under control, it’s not true, life escapes, life always finds ways to escape and to express itself.” And this is what these women and queers, (I say women in general, for us we are all women, it is a sister thing) meant, in this political sense, of rebellion against one’s own existence. This is what a colleague of ours, Monica, who is a visible trans woman, very much an activist, older, says. When we were talking about the closet, she said “I have never had a closet. I have always been in a

showcase, I am exposed, I can't hide, you accept me, you don't accept me, violence, non-violence, whatever," but we have not always had closets to put ourselves in.

Federico: Those people paid a high price because they were killed, they were beaten and they were not defended; it hurt them to say, "you asked for it." This is still happening. Recently, not so long ago, they killed a boy in Valencia. They said, "he was going with pimps," well, the most normal thing is that they kill you. And this happened in 2016.

Víctor: Yes, it's like this continuous cycle of culpability.

Federico: Like If you are older and go with the pimps, then the pimps kill you.

During Franco's regime, was there a collective activity of protest and denunciation or was it more a set of individual responses?

Federico: This happens in feminism, or social changes in general, who makes them? the bourgeoisie. It came more from Barcelona, from the Fluvià- Armand de Fluvià-who was a marquis, a count, or from the bourgeoisie. Also Clara Campoamor. Those who were there didn't have to sew, didn't have to wash. It was the same also within the collective, evidently. Well, look at the case of the poet Federico García Lorca. We have not been told his whole story, but he did it with La Barraca and is exposing a bit that diverse society that the dictatorship crushes. But there were all those movements. It also comes to us from Germany, when in the 20's all that mass of [people] left. All that also comes to Spain. It is curious, because at the beginning here the older people did not want to give their names, they did not want to be identified by the German theme. Because when Hitler came to power, he already had us all documented. And he went to the files

Víctor: The lists were already made. He didn't have to do anything.

Federico: And here there was that fear.

Víctor: That fear remained, of course.

Federico: There are people who say "I don't want to be a member. I don't want to be a member, lest the extreme right-wingers come in again," you get the reminiscence, let them come in and they already know who I am. It's scary because you've been hiding all your life. Going unnoticed was quite a job. Years later, decades, decades, you are still being crushed by Franco's regime.

Víctor: Two little things on this subject. One is that, in 2018 to organize these conferences, there is a book that collects this meeting called "40 Years Later", and doing the interviews to some participants of the Foundation to develop these stories, there were two sides. The side that said that no information about me should be included: "I tell you the story, but not my name or where I am from, not all that." Because of this fear that still remained and we are talking about 2018.

And on the other hand there was the "I can't understand why my story is important" side. It was really hard to say that it is important, for that very reason, because you have this feeling that what you have to do is to forget it, to pass it by, because it is my story it is a mistake. No. We have to vindicate it precisely

because of that. This was something that surprised me when I came across it so often. And then, with respect to collectivity, I just wanted to say that there is a word that is used a lot now and it is misused, which is empowerment, and it is often spoken of as something individual, and the origin is always collective.

Empowerment, when it happens, is because we are suddenly aware that we are not alone, that our story is not unique, that I am not the weirdest freak on the planet, but that what happens to me is shared. And what happens to me is shared because it is in opposition to something that tells me that it is not, that I am weird, that I am antisocial, that I am etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. So, when this happens, when this click happens, which is in the 70s, in the Spanish case but also in other countries, collectivity is produced. It is at that moment when identity is collectivized and this notion of a collective is created. What happens is that from the 70s to now all these years have passed, there have been so many transformations. Contemporary democracies cannot be understood without the civil rights brought by the LGTB collective, the struggle of the LGTB collective. So a lot has changed, but of course, if there is collectivity it is because there is a situation of repression.

Throughout the conversation about life under the Franco dictatorship, you have mentioned a corollary of situations of imprisonment, torture, psychiatric internment, humiliation, etc., for the people of this social group. In the eighties a parenthesis was opened towards a supposed democracy in Spain, do you think that in this democratic time there have been mechanisms and institutional processes that grant justice, reparation, truth and dignity to the people of this group?

Víctor: Zapatero's Law of Historical Memory, which was later left without funds, to say that I cannot repeal it, well, he took away the funds and so it is directly repealed. There are as many laws in Spain as you want. What happens is that they are not complied with because they depend on funds and that is the strategy that has been found to not comply with certain things. Even so, just for symbolic reasons, conservatives also want to repeal them. There have been attempts at reparations. What there hasn't been is like a solid democratic health to deal with memory on a proper cultural level. Of course, reparation, but how far does reparation go?

Federico: At the beginning there was a negotiation that went up to 78. It was very difficult because many were left out, many had died. There are records of 113 people who agreed to a minimum economic reparation. The maximum that was given was 12,000 euros, after having been in prison for five years. And you had to prove it. We have had the case, and we have accompanied a person who was in jail six times, but at that time they put you in jail, but there was no judge. It was a luxury to go with a lawyer.

Víctor: To Badajoz or Huelva.

Federico: Here it was in Madrid, to El Palomar, here to Carabanchel. The 5th gallery was El Palomar, which was where all the faggots were, they put them there. But they never left with a conviction, they never left with a "we have arrested you because you may have stolen" or "you may have" Yes, we know that you have been in jail, that you have been in jail for six months, you got out and two days later, you were caught and another six months. And you say "yes, but it was for being a faggot." That is what you say. There is no paper here that says that.

We accompanied this person and it was very interesting because in the tour he was the protagonist. Until that moment it was “I say it to the lawyers or I say it to the office and let them do the paperwork. “ But I said: “if you don’t budge, you have to give them the paperwork yourself.” We went as far as administrative litigation. We took the papers, we took all the documentation, but they could not give him anything. And it was a measly 6,000 euros. But it was not for the 6,000, but for him, because this person’s life had been destroyed. he said: “I have been crushed and I want to be recognized.”

Well, it was not favorable. We appealed and nothing. We went to administrative litigation. After the contentious-administrative proceedings, they said yes and no: “Yes, you have been in jail, and for being homosexual, but we cannot give you anything because it is not included in the development of the Law.” It was even said that only people who have a firm conviction, for being a vagrant or socially dangerous, will have access to the compensation. A great many people were left out. Then, all the people who were repressed and who went to jail also for public scandal, did not enter. Then everything was closed because not all the money that was there was not reached. They did not spend it.

Victor: It was left without funds.

Federico: When President Aznar came in, he also took everything away and only 113 people were able to benefit from those pittance, those crumbs.

Victor: But how far does reparation go? Trans women who are now 50 years old, maybe they were not repressed because they were in their childhood at that time, but they have not been able to access a single job with benefits and now they do not have a pension.

It is complicated. What I want would have to be oriented more towards an exercise of cultural memory so that there is a learning process, because otherwise it is complicated to introduce changes.

Federico: But we also ask the Administration for all this. All this also has to start from a recognition. Nothing went outside, it has not been said publicly that “we made a mistake, we apologize,” let the President of the Government say it, let him say it, let him have to say it. Just as I said it to Pablo Iglesias with the Children’s Act, who apologized for having arrived late, and he apologized. I told him that we, the LGTB collective, would love to hear him say it, and that there should be a reparation and a monument, something that has not yet been done in recognition of this suffering and the abuses of power. We are asking for that memory to be visible. Why do they put the monuments to the Constitution, to the other and to the other and not to ours? That would help.

Curiously, together with the lack of a historical memory that supports rigorous processes of justice, reparation, dignity and truth, at the same time, in 2005, Spain passed the same-sex marriage law. On the other hand, millions of people celebrate Pride day every year in different cities of the country, isn’t this image paradoxical or contradictory?

Victor: I think they are two different lines. I mean, one is that it has been recognized that the right seems to be like a right to consumption, to a personalized consumption, oriented to a pattern. So it seems that in this scheme we were talking before about transgression or assimilation, it has gained an assimilation very

much oriented to a type of consumption that is very concrete and very specific.

What we ask ourselves is, given that Pride is celebrated and Madrid Pride is one of the biggest in the world, it is one of the festivals, so called "fiesta," that gives more money to the country, what will happen when this is no longer the case? Because these are waves, what will happen then? Will the political part be affected as well? Will the reduction of rights be affected as well? That's on the one hand.

On the other hand, equal marriage came after the so-called AIDS crisis. It was not one of the demands of the activism of the 1970s. In fact, it is very interesting to read the manifestos of the activists of the 1970s, because they demanded the opposite: abolition of marriage, abolition of the patriarchal family, abolition of the institutional structures that pretend to give a form to sexual and affective life, which must be free and not institutionalized. After this crisis, which has hit the generation of the 80s and 90s so severely (because medication only arrived in 1996), that couples cannot be partners in hospitals, they are not allowed to see their loved one.

That loved one who is dying is condemned to spend the last hours of his life alone or with a family that may have expelled him from home, that has rejected him, that has disowned him, that denies him, that tries to erase his own memory in order to rewrite history because it seems to them that this person is a disgrace. All this has to go through institutional recognition. That is why it is claimed, for that and for the transmission of heritage, because it turns out that yes, we are a couple, we live together, but if I die there is no type of recognized right. That is why it is claimed, for this reason and for the transmission of the patrimony, because it turns out that yes, we are a couple, we live together, but if I die there is no type of recognized right. Then the whole discourse has been transformed, that "love wins" "whoever you love, Madrid loves you" and all that publicity. But in reality all this has to do with a very primary thing of unrecognized fundamental rights of transmission of heritage.

Are there spaces for intergenerational meeting and dialogue within the LGTBIQ+ community?

Federico: There are no spaces where this can be allowed either, that is, there are still no such spaces. We see it with some groups, because obviously among young people there are also people who want to know the history, but there are no spaces where we can deal with intergenerational issues. They are here and sometimes they come here to see their history.

But we are dealing with all that. There is no work addressing this approach, for this being together, in communion, as Christians say. There are no projects to say, well, we are going to create spaces for the elderly. That costs, it is costing a lot.

Victor: New "closets" have been generated, new "forms of closets" have been generated, in the sense that many times we are told: "there are no spaces for intergenerational interrelation." Yes there are, there are some. What happens is that they are often associated with shame. Sex is a space of intergenerational relationship that is weaponized, that is hidden, that does not want to say that this relationship is maintained. And then that entails new forms of closet that we also have to put on the table and talk about. It is true that intergenerational dialogues do not normally take place, or we do not think of other types of relationship that could exist, of accompaniment, of mentoring, of advice, of sharing, and we want to work on that.

22. What about the negative stigmatization of people belonging to this group, has this stigma changed with the end of Franco's regime?

Federico: I think we have made progress because we are also becoming visible. There is a continuous struggle, not of the whole collective, but also of some groups. The great masses control us and tell us "here yes" for the money. It is commoditized. As long as you give money everything goes perfect, but don't give me problems. But we are still some rebels, because you see, we go around with the necklaces and in old age. And it shocks, it still shocks. It's still shocking that with my husband we kiss where we feel like it. Well, many people stare at me, and lately I've been wearing skirts, because now I wear skirts. That is still something...

Victor: That's what generates that, all of a sudden.

Federico: Of course, "this is not your place, what are you doing? You are not modern" It is a terrible thing; I say, "what do you mean I am not modern and what is more modern than this?"

Federico: It is still noticeable. There is a lot of progress, obviously before they didn't stare at you like that, they would give you a slap, or throw something at you, or they wouldn't allow you, or they would take you to jail. Now it's like: "well, we are going to put up with you, we have no choice." So that's it, taking the day to day, the everyday, and changing it. But all those changes also come from that type of modeling. You have to facilitate that model and dedicate your life as well. We have to pull the cart, we have to be there, and that sometimes is very nice because there are people who unite. And it has not been from the preaching, from the pulpit, but you see that these people are telling you, when you go to the supermarket, for example, and you are picking up and they say "oh, how beautiful the painted nails!" You have already generated something.

Victor: It is a conversation from the everyday.

Federico: Yes, saying "well, make me a steak for my husband." It is a lack of that everydayness. In other words, making it everyday, normalizing it, because we have been normal all our lives, those are the actions we are trying to achieve and there is a lot of progress.

Then also, seeing trans children, or children who have it very clear and that the environment accompanies them, is a happiness. That was not possible in our time. So I am very happy when I see that, when I see two girls holding hands, or two boys expressing their affection. We are making progress, and the important thing is that progress in the street and in politics, because today it comes, tomorrow it goes. But if it is very strong in the street, nobody will take it away from us.

Victor: But saying that yes, it has happened that there is a visualization of the LGBT, of the collective, of gay men and lesbian women and trans people, young people. We are used to seeing it within very specific canons of beauty, etc. Have things changed, has there been progress, of course, but we have to make a change, to think that the 20-year-old white gay person, well-to-do, who can work, who has his series on Netflix to watch, is living at the same time as a client of ours who is 86 years old, who has a non-contributory pension, and who has a fear in his body associated with the trauma that has not gone away either. So, have things changed? Yes, yes. The thing is that there are many realities coexisting.

From what you have been saying, it seems that progress is being made in terms of the recognition and “dignification” of the collective in the order of everyday social life, but at the same time we are witnessing the resurgence of an extreme right that demands the removal of symbols that do not respond to the celebration of a heteronormative reality. What is your reading of a possible regression of rights in the face of reactionary policies?

Federico: In the legal sphere, yes, but there comes a time when they can take it away. That is what we are seeing now. That is to say, they are taking away books where the three letters enter. The Inquisition is over, and they are going back to that. So, legally, since they have the power, they can do it. But if we were united as in the street we would say “Who are you to take a book from me?” In towns and in communities where fascists are governing, because VOX are Falangists, and they are also saying it, they no longer have the mask. And it is again going back to national Catholicism, and to the values of more than 70 years ago, because they are already going back to 70 years ago. Where they are governing, the first thing they did was to remove the flag. They could not put the flag, which is now Constitutional. They have said no, but they go into libraries and say that the parental pin cannot be used to talk about homosexuality, because this generates indoctrination.

Victor: That is the Law of Social Danger. The Dangerousness and Social Rehabilitation Law said that homosexual acts were prosecuted. What were homosexual acts? A non-binary gender expression, a mannerism in effeminate males, in masculine females, wearing clothes that did not correspond to your gender. Those were acts in the sense of what the Russian laws are now, that homosexual propaganda is not allowed. Well, this is the same thing, to protect, creating the image that we are dangerous, to protect minors we have to remove books that talk about sex education or that explain what diversity is. This is a return to the ghost of dangerousness.

Then, if the Transition had ended, what happened in 87, I think it is, would not have happened, when two girls were arrested for kissing each other in Puerta del Sol, because of the Public Scandal Law that still allowed it. What happened then? That a kissing was organized, the first kissing that was organized in Puerta del Sol to protest against that. That feeling of saying “I don’t think this could happen, because people go out on the street and stop it” is not so clear to me. I do believe that there is a lot of awareness created, but I also believe that there are many people who are depoliticized.

Federico: When we mobilized after the death of Samuel, how it mobilized everybody, in that sense we went and made strength. Madrid filled up, with the pandemic and everything, with the mask, we filled Puerta del Sol. But of course, it was us and we who were there. No one else came (well, some politicians did come for the photo and not for anything else), because otherwise they would have to draft more LGTB policies.

Victor: Not the 2 million that are mobilized when they come to the Pride Festival. The week after Samuel’s death there was the murder of a trans woman, a migrant, a sex worker. There was nowhere near a mobilization. What I want to say is that we must continue to consider what is recognized within fiction, for example, Netflix, (I insist and it is very good that it is), but we must continue to look at what are the bodies that continue to be left out.

Many of elderly LGTBQ+ people have not only suffered the harshness of Franco’s repression, but in many cases, they have been

abandoned by their own families. What problems and realities do they encounter in the various stages of their aging and death?

Federico: Until our organization was born, they were people that nobody took care of. They ended up in the common grave, because nobody took care of them. But the same thing that happens with cognitive impairment, with Alzheimer's disease, these people are now in a street situation (if there is no organization that takes care of them and makes them visible). That is why we started the Foundation, because obviously you are faced with such a bleeding reality that you have to respond. You can't look the other way, because it is something that is there. People who grow old, who have given everything to their family, and that their family at a certain moment, who have taken advantage of you, because you have taken care of your father, your mother, everything. But when they die, they say: this house has to be sold because it belongs to everybody, it is the inheritance and you are left in the fucking street, poor, because you have not been able to work, because you have had to take care of your father, your mother and because you could not make a living either. As you lived with your family, with your mother and she had a pension, you could not ask for a non-contributory pension because they did not give it to you, but you find yourself at 72 years old, without a single, lousy euro, and without a pension to ask for (when your mother dies, you can ask for it), and you find yourself in the street. That is the reality.

And how does that affect you, how can it not affect you, how can you not end up getting sick? Well, right now this man is in a nursing home with cognitive impairment and mental illness, because we have insisted, because you inform the relatives, obviously you have to inform them, and they say: "Oh, well, very well, thank you for informing me. From solidarity, who buys them clothes? Who makes sure that they are well cared for and that this person is respected? Who cares? Who goes to see them? Thanks to all these people, to generate this spirit of solidarity, the volunteers take care of them, they are part of the Foundation and their function and mission is this accompaniment.

We have trained them in accompaniment in death, and we know that they die with us, and that brings us the knowledge that this person has died with dignity, that he/she has died loved, that he/she has died accompanied, and that he/she has left his/her legacy. It is not that person that nobody knows who he is, that has been found dead and that has been taken to the common grave, or to where the City Council makes their burials of the poor. Now there is a figure, or an organization. This will not happen again. We have already gone through enough, that at least in the last moments of our life, well, know that you are leaving and that you are leaving your legacy, that we are going to hold your hand, that we are going to embrace you and that you are going to leave. And those of us who have accompanied you, you can see a face that it has been, as many say, it has been worth it, it has been worth it.

Can you tell us about a case that illustrates the role played by this Foundation in the accompaniment of these people through old age and death?

Federico: One who provided us with a very big lesson and now a documentary is going to be released, was José. He was a person who has always had a very bad life. He was the typical bad faggot and had to play the role of the bad guy in order to survive. And at the end, when he was already calm, when he had found his place, which was in the Foundation and he was already happy, bang, a cancer of the esophagus. In six months he died. He felt very angry with the world. But that anger had already passed

with him, he already knew who to blame (us). And there came a time when we could not talk about cancer, we could not talk about death, but he was working because we were with him and we respected him. He opted for chemo treatment “until they burn me.” And we said “well, until they burn you out.” He did not want palliative care until a moment came, when he was about three or four days away from death, the volunteers came, we had him attended 24 hours a day and he told me: “Now I don’t need the volunteers to come, thank them, give them my love, they have done a wonderful job with me, it has been wonderful, but I no longer need to be with other people, because now the road I have left I have to do it alone, and I already have the strength.”

To hear that is astonishing. We were saying at that moment that he had really understood something important. He understood in the last days of his life that he was the protagonist. He had learned that. And he would say, “I have to enjoy it,” because also he did enjoy it, we were giving him morphine and then [he would say], “Give me more.” And you gave him on demand, which the doctor told us to do. And that brings us back to joy, that he has been very much loved, which is the most important thing, because he has never had that love in his life.

Victor: And with the certainty that you will leave being recognized and remembered for who you really are, without denying your identity, without denying your history and without forgetting it.

Is it because of one of these stories of accompaniment that your Residence is called Josete Massa?

Federico: Of course. His name is Josete Massa, one of those people who were nobody. The same thing happened to him. He was a person that nobody knew. Yes, the people in his apartment knew him, and the pharmacist, and the Chinese guy next door, but he had a very hidden life.

In the past, those who had money went to psychiatric hospitals, they didn’t go to jail. So Josete was always in and out of jail. Then he, in the last moments, we entered his life because the social worker of his health center heard me, she heard me on the radio, at 2:00 in the morning (the weird programs, so diverse, always put it on for the general public, at a derogatory time), and she called me: “I have a patient of ours who is very lonely, who does not let us intervene, if you can give us a hand”.

And I went, well, as we say, that “a fool’s eye can’t be wrong.” And the recognition was from the very first moment, because he was also a person who was already in bad shape. Evidently he had prostate cancer, he was alone, he had very strong pains and he drove the whole neighborhood crazy because he shouted, because he went out to the balcony naked, his shirt was open, he welcomed us with his hand like this, with the probe, and with a “what do you want?” And the social workers said, “We came to talk to you, Josete, can you leave us?,” “Come tomorrow, I am very busy.”

And they had been like that for a year and a bit. So he never let them in. But when I went I told him, “you are a very interesting person, you must be very important.” He looked at me like that and I said “don’t tell me”; I said, “you were an executive, the briefcase gives it away,” with the piss there. He was like “this one is worse than me.” And I said, “by the way, my name is Federico, look, I’m from a foundation for elderly care.” He’s like, I say “can we go inside” and he says “sure.” I go in with him and I say “look, I didn’t want to say it, but you know, we are from the lesbian,

gay, transsexual collective..." But he says "I'm not gay." What do you mean you're not gay? "I'm bisexual... from the family." And that's when I gave him the phone. I gave him a whole thing, blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah. And the other one stayed like that. I told him "think about it, but you are no longer alone, Josete. You are not alone anymore. We are with you. When you need me, you call me." I left him the phone number, and two hours later he called me: "Federico, please come, I'm alone, I'm very scared." And that's when we started, but it didn't last long, because he already had metastasis.

Then, at the last moment, in the last moments (besides, Pedro Zerolo had died two months before), he told me: "I don't want to die now, I don't want to die now". I said: "It is impossible, Josete. That body has to die. But you are not going to die, you are going to be in our hearts always, you are going to be in our thoughts, we are going to remember you. What's more, the first residence we open in Madrid is going to have your name." And the other one stares at me, like, "but I am nobody, who am I that they should name a residence after me?" and I say, "What do you mean, you are nobody?" I say, "look, Pedro Zerolo did not give us a euro. For me, you are much more important. You are going to have your name." "Well, if you put my name, put Josete." Don't worry, I'm going to put that. The change in his face that the news made...It helped him a lot to understand that this transition was going to go well. And now, of course, everybody knows Josete Massa. Who was Josete Massa? A person who was there, without any value, without any history, who was treated as crazy, and who today has recognition.

That is why there is a need for this space where people can be given dignity again, that is the Residence. What is going to be opened now is a Residence for the elderly. Because we have seen that in reality there are people who die with palliative care, with the issues with regards to dependency, who are not cared for as they deserve. To be able to open a space where they can choose, because the problem is not that it is a ghetto, as we have always been told, "is that you want to open a ghetto." And I say "No. We want to exercise freedom of choice." We want to decide if I want to be cared for in the Residence because of its methodology, its form, its design, whatever; people will be able to choose.

Victor: And at least we are going to talk about it. First of all, it is not an exclusive resource, it is specialized, which is different. Here comes a lady from the neighborhood who is 90-something years old, who comes to do her memory exercises with the volunteers. She is not the collective, she is a neighbor. The resources are for everyone. What is explained is that it is specialized so that people have the guarantee that it is a safe space. That happens to us a lot when they come to talk to us from companies that have residences all over the country, or senior centers, who tell us "well, we don't have anyone from the collective." Right. Visible. Of course, this is the story, that the problem, the data that we receive, is that people reassemble when they are older, because they do not perceive that the space for the elderly is a safe space for the group.

So, it cannot happen that at this stage of life, which is so vulnerable, you have to rearm yourself, to make yourself invisible, to deny yourself. That is why there are such high rates of depression as well, and we want to avoid that. This residence is a specialized resource that will also help people to talk about this, so that people in their own spaces can ask themselves. "Ah, well, maybe I have to train the staff, maybe I have to have awareness talks, maybe I have to talk, ask, listen."

Analyzing your activities, I realize that there is an important focus on the area of education and awareness-raising aimed at reinforcing this paradigm shift. How do you participate in the movement for formal and non-formal expanded education?

Federico: See how important it is that we have an area specialized in training and research, because we see that that is where the real change is, where we have to go to make that paradigm shift, in schools, because we go to high schools and we talk. We have also gone to schools, [so] they can see the older people and the older people can also talk to them, and tell them, and ask questions. The children do ask questions.

Victor: There are some very cool dialogues.

Federico: Sure, then when they know that I have a daughter they say: "Oh, what do you mean you have a daughter?" "Sure", like something [weird] ... Then when there are boys and girls who have two fathers, or who have two mothers, they feel good, as if to say: "you see, we are not so weird." It is important to see all this in high schools, in senior centers, in day centers, in universities, etc....and we are open for them to come and do internships. Of course, all that is changing.

Victor: It always comes from them, that is to say, it always comes from teachers, generally female teachers, who want to do something in their classroom time. It is not part of a regulated training, it is not part of a program yet, we are still fighting for it.

Federico: We are working on it. Also, because the training for the Certificate of Professionalism in Care also knows that we insist and they come. More to sensitize them than to train them, because we are also doing a module (and that is why it is going to be called a specialized residence), the staff has to be trained in that diversity. We are also hoping that other residences have the seal, that they can be through a seal, as they have in Europe, in Germany, in Holland. And people can say "well, I can be here too, there are trained people." We also told them this at a congress on dependency because we are already known and they call us and I told them, "do you know how many (all the companies were there) how many people from the group you have in your residences?" And I said, "36,000. Look at all the people you don't take care of." Because they are armed, or because of other weird things (as in a residence that we do not want to mention explicitly).

"I am interested in making a LGBT wing," I say "Oh yeah? like a zoo", there the lions, etc. When the idea is inclusion, when the idea is to work for respect, for us to live together, there will be no problem. But no, "are you from the collective, there on the third floor and down the hall. Come on, let's go see the faggots."

Victor: And then we go to the centers.

Federico: And they see it as normal, but it's like, "are you guys all right?"

Victor: Sometimes we have gone to talk, to give an awareness-raising talk to senior centers, which have asked us to do so, because "we have had some problem." You go, you talk, everything goes away. There is nothing more than talking about things, explaining them. And that's it. The whole novelty wears off and the whole problem wears off.

What maintains your energy and your dedication in this fight for the rights of the LGBTQ+ collective in a complex context of multidimensional crisis?

Federico: I analyze it many times, because I am not a believer or anything, but I thank God for having become a faggot. And being queer is what gives me strength, to say no, this has to be changed. And I think that's what it's been, being what I am. And that I have put myself in a place where I don't want the world to be gray. The world has to be colorful, that diversity has to be there. That I have to be here as long as I continue, because sometimes we go.

Victor: For me it is to see and study how activism was before and how activism is, in part, now, which is more saying and less doing. And to admire very much the activists of previous decades, who did much more than what they said. There is something in the academy that is like a self-indulgent thing of writing books about precarity and vulnerability from largely comfortable armchairs. And it seems to me that what the foundation brings back to me is that we are where we need to be, which is expanding the places of recognition, not only writing about how necessary it is, but also doing it as if it has to go in parallel.