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The Premier Media Source for LGBTQ Texas

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Preserving  
the **past**

Queer History South Conference  
comes to Dallas



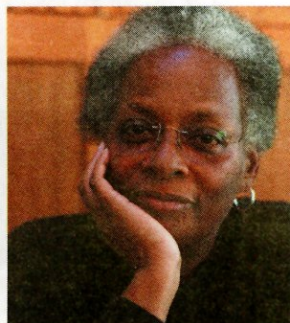
2022 QUEER HISTORY SOUTH

# Archives for ALL, *Y'all!*

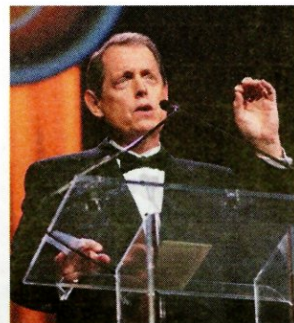
## Dallas College - El Centro Campus



MOE VELA – attorney, strategist,  
and former White House Advisor



MANDY CARTER – resistance  
fellow, southern social justice



MIKE ANGLIN – Baker v Wade  
Legal Panel, community activist

*It's not too late to attend this unique conference about locating and sharing the rich, but often under-documented history of southern contributions to LGBTQ+ history and society.*



[bit.ly/Archives-DallasVoice](http://bit.ly/Archives-DallasVoice)

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# More to LGBTQ history

## LGBTQ HISTORY

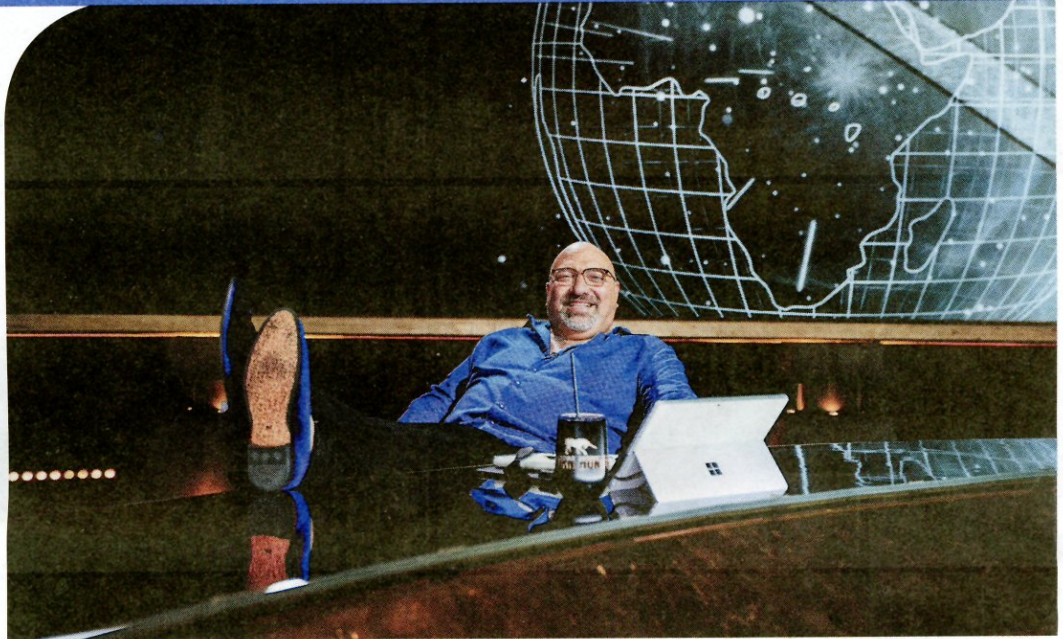
Moe Vela: History includes the challenges, obstacles pain and struggles, not just the highlights

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer  
taffet@dallasvoice.com

**D**on't expect to hear about his time at the White House when Moe Vela speaks at the Queer History South: Archives for All, Y'all conference in Dallas this weekend. And he won't be focusing on his Amazon Prime TV show *Unicorn Hunters*, which is in production for another season.

Instead, Vela said, he'll tell the story behind the story — how he grew up in the Rio Grande Valley without having the safety and security of a neighborhood like Oak Lawn.

"We usually view someone's successes, accolades and accomplishments to define a person," Vela said. But to learn from history, we need to know more



Moe Vela on the *Unicorn Hunters* set

than what was accomplished. We need to learn the details, the challenges, the obstacles and the pain and struggles behind the successes to truly learn from

our past, he said.

That's what he'll focus on when he's in Dallas for the 13-state LGBTQ history conference at Dallas College/El Centro

from Sept. 30-Oct. 2.

To get a full and fair understanding

HISTORY, Page 26

## Queer History South comes to Dallas

*Archives for All, Y'all features speakers who've been collecting, archiving, teaching and exhibiting LGBTQ history*

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer  
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LGBTQ history is more than Stonewall. It's stories of LGBTQ lives from cities across the country. And it is on display this weekend in Dallas as the Queer History South conference comes to town.

Queer History South is a network of community members from across a 13-state area who share best practices for those collecting LGBTQ histories, archives, exhibits, historical research and education. The organization holds its second — and pandemic-delayed — conference, dubbed Archives for All, Y'all, in Dallas this weekend, Sept. 30-Oct. 2.

The conference is of interest to archivists, historians, librarians, faculty, students, educators, nonprofit employees and community

members working to preserve their community's narratives. Moe Vela (see accompanying story) is the opening plenary speaker on Friday at 9 a.m.

The Dallas Way is the principle collector of LGBTQ artifacts and stories in the DFW area. Robert Emery will present a workshop on Outrageous Oral, The Dallas Way's speaker series that has included presentations by more than 100 community leaders.

Other local history organizations will also present, including Invisible Histories of the South based in Birmingham, Ala., and founder of Queer History South, and The Austin LGBTQ+ Oral History Project at University of Texas. A presenter from the LGBT+ Archives Project of Louisiana will discuss dealing with incomplete archives sometimes caused by state officials who destroyed or redacted incriminating documents.

On Friday night, attendees will visit the first and only LGBTQ historical marker in Texas, which stands on Cedar Springs Road, and then they will check out the world's largest LGBTQ cowboy dance hall — The Round-Up Saloon. Others may take the Green Line to Fair Park for the opening day

of the State Fair of Texas.

Mandy Carter is the opening plenary speaker on Saturday. She is the co-founder of Southerners on New Ground, the National Black Justice Coalition and Equality North Carolina. Her papers are archived at Duke University Libraries.

Speakers from the LGBTQ History Museum of Central Florida and the associate curator of education and outreach from the Orlando Museum of Art will discuss their work cruising for gay history outside the bars. In the afternoon, three speakers from University of North Texas will talk about the school's physical and digital archives, research and preservation of North Texas LGBTQ history.

The conference continues Saturday with a reception at the nearby Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum, with a special presentation on the museum's LGBTQ exhibit. The bar at the museum opens at 6:39 p.m., two minutes after sunset signals the end of Shabbat.

The conference takes place at Dallas College/El Centro, 801 Main St. For more information, visit [InvisibleHistory.org/qhs](http://InvisibleHistory.org/qhs).







## HISTORY

From Page 8

of LGBTQ history, Vela said he likes to focus on more than history's highlights. Most people think of Stonewall and then a series of court decisions when they think of the steps to LGBTQ equality. But, he said, it was the individual stories behind each of these milestones that made them happen.

Vela holds a place in LGBTQ history himself as the first LGBTQ American and the first Hispanic American to serve in a senior executive role in the White House in two administrations — first working for Vice President Al Gore during the Clinton administration and then working for Vice President Joe Biden during the Obama administration.

He was appointed to his first senior White House role when he was in his 30s. How did he get there so young? "Everything is about relationships," he said.

Vela said he happened to have had a few drinks at the time, and so he piped up, commenting that he was himself a lawyer-type. So she said, "Send me your resume." He heard back promptly, was interviewed and got the job working for Gore.

And Vela did a great job of hiring staff. His chief of staff was Ron Klain, who now serves as chief of staff to President Biden.

From the onset, Vela said, both Gore and Biden were on the side of equality. Obviously, both had LGBTQ friends and understood the issues. But he explained how he made himself a valuable advisor on LGBTQ issues and used marriage equality as an example.

"The Bidens were passionate about marriage equality," he said. "They were there ethically, spiritually, mentally."

In fact, Vela said, they were ahead of

was politically helpful to let these cases play out.

So understanding their role in the office of the vice president and thinking in context of history and progress, he advised the Bidens against making a statement earlier and getting out in front of the Obamas. Biden accepted the advice until, in response to a question, he came out in favor of marriage equality, prompting Obama to make his own pro-marriage equality statement within days.

As an advisor on Hispanic issues, Vela gave the example of immigration as another sensitive issue.

"Immigration is a very divisive issue," he said, "a confluence of morality, legality, policy and politics." He said Democrats make a mistake by not acknowledging it's illegal to enter the country without documentation.

"It's about messaging," he said. "We have to be supportive from a humanitarian perspective, but we can't ignore the law. [Support seeking] asylum through

ness and respect," he said. "Tell them, 'Let's show you how to apply for asylum.' Treat them the way we'd want to be treated."

And even if it's determined the person can't stay in this country, he added, they should be "deported with dignity. ... Let's get to the root of the problem."

Vela listed several reasons people leave their homes to come to the U.S. One of the main reasons is lack of available jobs. So one of the first things the U.S. should be doing is helping to create jobs in their home countries. "Help [those countries] empower their people so they don't need to leave," he said.

The second main driver of immigration is people being tormented in their home countries by the drug cartels. Noting that the U.S. is the number one buyer of drugs, Vela said, "If we cut off the demand, the supply would no longer be needed. We're part of the problem."

He said the U.S. must also address the climate change that's fueling some immigration. He suggested teaching these countries to "enter the clean energy world," by helping them create wind and solar power.

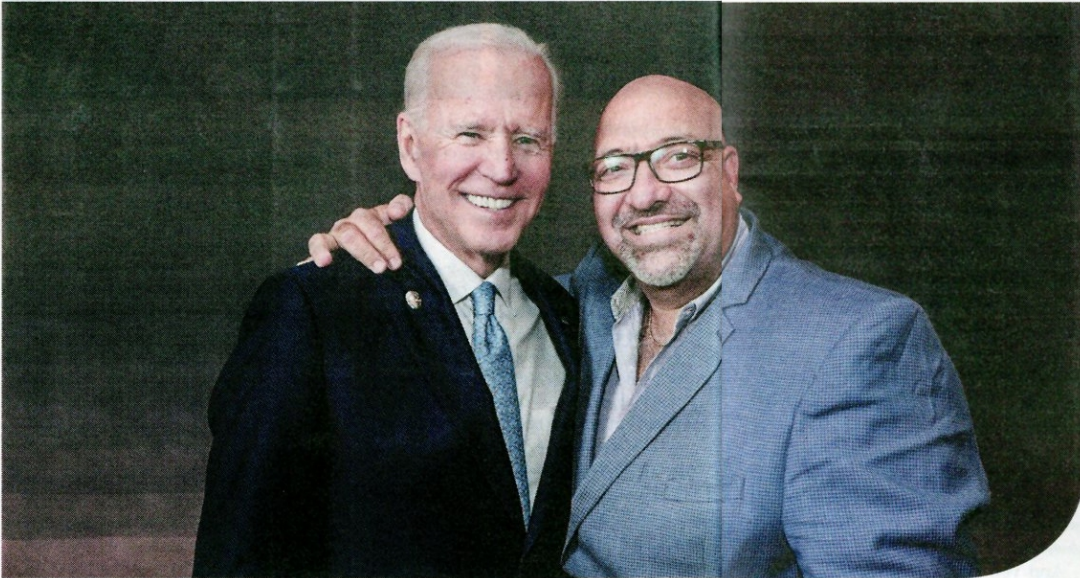
On trans issues, Vela declared, "Gay men have no idea what it means to be trans." He said as a gay man, he can be supportive from an equality standpoint, comparing it to the issue of domestic violence.

"You don't have to experience it to be supportive," he said. "I wasn't able to be who I was for the first 18 or 19 years of my life. Authenticity and living truth is very important to me."

Vela talked briefly about his current career as a creator and panelist, along with Steve Wozniak and Lance Bass, of *Unicorn Hunters*, a show he describes as *Shark Tank* on steroids that allows the audience to participate in the investments. But then he pivoted back to the conference in Dallas and its focus on LGBTQ history, describing himself part of the AIDS generation. That generation, he said, includes more perspectives than just that of ACT UP founder Larry Kramer.

Vela promised to share with conference attendees that bit of Texas and Southern gay history, but, he stressed, "My story wasn't any more special or more challenging than anyone else's as part of history. So we can affirm each other."

Hear Vela tell his own story at Archives for All, Y'All at Dallas College/El Centro on Friday.



Moe Vela with then-presidential candidate Joe Biden in 2020

Having been born into a family with a legacy of service, Vela got a job with the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C.

"I was out drinking at a microbrewery with a number of other political appointees," he said. "The director of White House operations said, 'My Aunt Patsy's office said they're looking for a lawyer-type.'"

the Obamas on the issue. "Personally, I wanted to tell them, 'Oh, just say it.'" he said.

But Vela put his own self-interest aside and counseled respect and deference to the president and First Lady. He also understood that we were winning one marriage equality lawsuit after another, and each judge's ruling added another interesting argument. In the long run, it

the proper channels and system put in place."

If that system isn't working, he added, then let's fix it.

Vela said that while the GOP likes to accuse Democrats of supporting open borders, "more people have been turned away and deported this year under Biden than ever. We're not soft on the issue."

The trick is to find a balance. "Treat [undocumented immigrants] with kind-



# VOICES

OPINIONS FROM OUR PUBLISHER

## Know your history, honor your history

Queer History South 2022 conference takes place in Dallas Sept. 30 - Oct. 2

The contributions of LGBTQ people toward the betterment of the world cannot be underestimated, and the world is a better place when LGBTQ people are allowed to flourish. From government and warfare to engineering and science to the humanities and the arts, LGBTQ people have been at the forefront of progress throughout time.

History books should be filled with stories of LGBTQ people exhibiting courage, intelligence, bravery, kindness and victory. But our LGBTQ history has been hidden from us — intentionally!

With so much external energy focused on erasing us, we must work even harder to secure our place in history. Any marginalized community must take responsibility to record its own story. For that reason, Dallas will host Queer History South 2022, a 13-state regional conference focused on LGBTQ history.

Archiving is activism!

Queer History South was created by Dr. Maigen Sullivan and Josh Burford in Birmingham, Ala., to share best practices in historical archiving techniques and to network with other researchers. Their first QHS conference was produced in 2019 and attracted historians from all over the country. The inaugural conference was so successful and created so much good will among the attendees, it became apparent they would have to repeat it.

Dallas won the bid to host the 2022 conference. The North Texas Planning Committee settled on a theme: "Archives for ALL, Y'all!" More than 300 scholars, university librarians, museum curators,



**Leo Cusimano**  
From the Publisher's desk

K-12 educators, authors, graduate students and community volunteers/enthusiasts will convene in Dallas on Sept. 30 for the event.

The focus is the southern region of the U. S. One third of U.S. citizens who identify as LGBTQ live in the 13 states referred to as the South. Many of the legal advancements in LGBTQ equality have originated in the South; this is an important story to tell.

Although the focus is on the South, the conference will host attendees from all over the U.S. Anyone who shares an interest in archiving is welcome to attend. Here is a link to the conference website:

[SWAY.office.com/SGS9joL0LH-KvHS16?ref=email](https://sway.office.com/SGS9joL0LH-KvHS16?ref=email).

The Dallas Way ([TheDallasWay.org](https://TheDallasWay.org)) is one of four leading sponsors of this LGBT history conference, along with the Invisible Histories Project ([InvisibleHistory.org](https://InvisibleHistory.org)), Dallas College ([DallasCollege.edu](https://DallasCollege.edu)) and The University of North Texas ([UNT.edu](https://UNT.edu)).

The Friday morning keynote speaker will be Moises "Moe" V. Vela Jr., the first



## Archives for ALL, Y'all!

openly gay, Hispanic senior White House advisor. He was named one of the Top 100 Hispanics in America by Hispanic Business magazine and is the co-creator and co-star of the streaming-TV series *Unicorn Hunters*.

Vela is also the author of the best-selling book, *Little Secret, Big Dreams: Pink and Brown in the White House*, an auto-biography detailing his upbringing in a Hispanic Catholic home in Texas, his coming out story and his journey to the White House.

(Watch for an interview with Moises Vela in the Sept. 30 issue of Dallas Voice.)

The Saturday morning keynote speaker will be Mandy Carter, co-founder of Southerners on New Ground, the National Black Justice Coalition and Equality North Carolina. The collection of Mandy Carter papers from 1970 through 2013 is held at Duke University Libraries.

The weekend will also include a reception hosted by Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum, which will host a reception, opening all their exhibits to conference guests and offer a rarely-seen peek into their deepest archive vaults; and a keynote panel discussing *Baker v. Wade*, the first constitutional challenge for LGBTQ equality filed in Texas.

Learning our LGBTQ history leads us to respect and appreciate our LGBTQ elders. Our current LGBTQ seniors represent the Stonewall generation, the AIDS generation that fought and died to give us the privileges and equality we enjoy today.

Discovering our LGBTQ history helps

us to appreciate the struggles and the courage of our previous generations. We learn we have much to thank them for, and we raise them up. To advocate for those who first advocated for us is our greatest honor.

Studying history can provide a road map for creating success in the future. There is no need to reinvent the wheel if smart people have succeeded with a plan in the past. Sure, we may need to tweak their former plan, but we do not need to start from scratch.

For example, the COVID pandemic was greatly shortened by using the knowledge we gained from the AIDS epidemic. And if marriage equality disappears, we will need to know what brought us to marriage equality the first time in order to restore it once again.

Fortunately for us, there are many authors and researchers, librarians and curators, educators and graduate students who are diving deeply into LGBTQ history. Many of those will gather in Dallas Sept. 30-Oct. 2 to share current research and to network with like-minded history enthusiasts. And you can reap the benefits of their work by registering for the conference yourself at [EventBrite.com/e/qhs-2022-archives-for-all-yall-conference-tickets-53453348404](https://EventBrite.com/e/qhs-2022-archives-for-all-yall-conference-tickets-53453348404).

Leo Cusimano is owner and publisher of Dallas Voice. He wrote this column initially for *News Is Out*, a pioneering national collaborative of the leading local queer news publishers. Join the *News Is Out* newsletter at [https://newsisout.com/?utm\\_campaign=signups&utm\\_source=DallasVoice](https://newsisout.com/?utm_campaign=signups&utm_source=DallasVoice).





# Archives for ALL, y'all!!

**Attend. Volunteer. Donate.**

Queer History South brings together over 300 archivists, curators, researchers, students, and community enthusiasts to Dallas to network and learn about 'best practices' in LGBTQ+ history archiving.

Friday, September 30 through Sunday, October 2, 2022

Dallas College — El Centro Campus

[bit.ly/Archives-DallasVoice](https://bit.ly/Archives-DallasVoice)

