

# Strip AIDS 2020 Podcast Transcript

## Episode 3: Paco

### Alexandro Segade

This is Alex Segade — Welcome back to Visual AIDS' new podcast series. Visual AIDS uses art to fight AIDS by provoking dialogue, supporting HIV+ artists, and preserving a legacy, because AIDS is not over.

This is the third of four episodes covering Strip AIDS 2020, a series of four newly commissioned comics that have just launched online at [visualaids.org/comics](http://visualaids.org/comics).

As a visual and accessible medium, comics have long been used as educational tools in the fight against HIV and AIDS, providing life-saving information about safer sex practices and representing communities and perspectives often erased from public health narratives.

To celebrate the release of the comics, we've invited each of the artists to be in conversation with fellow AIDS activists and artists to discuss themes and issues that are tackled in their work. This week we are looking at *Paco*, a comic by Carlo Quispe that explores the fear and stigma surrounding HIV testing in the gay community. Joining Carlo is the legendary artist and HIV advocate Joey Terrill.

### Joey Terrill

Hi Carlo.

### Carlo Quispe

Hi Joseph.

### Joey Terrill

So, why don't you tell me about yourself, please?

### Carlo Quispe

Okay, so, my name is Carlo Quispe and I'm a cartoonist, originally from Lima, Peru and I live in New York. And now I live in Brooklyn. I went to college in the 90s and graduated in 2000 and started working, sort of doing animation for commercials with a company called Ink Tank led by a man called Ro Blackman who was a New Yorker cartoonist who became an animator and then started his own animation company. So I you know, I just had been making some comic strips. Whatever — during college, in school I came up with my own comic strip. And yeah, I

was able to set up an interview to see if they needed somebody to do like inking for the cartoons.

And so even though I'd never done animation before my drawing style, It's like a cool crude primitive style and R O Blackman whose drawings are also very primitive and squiggly—he did the 7Up squiggly guy. I don't know if you remember that all commercial.

Joey Terrill

Yes, I do.

Carlo Quispe

Okay, so it's just like a black-and-white weird stylized squiggly lines very European looking, you know with some watercolors underneath and so he was into my stuff. He was just like into my my kind of raw style at the time. And so I just started doing inking for animation, started learning how to edit animation and on video we started doing commercials for Saturday Night Live and Comedy Central and then 9/11 happened and basically ruined the economy at the time.

But then when the studio closed I just decided to do construction work or be a waiter or help people move, just to be able to just pay my rent and still be able to do like the kind of comics that I wanted to do, right. Kind of in the independent comic strips. And so Bush extended the unemployment benefits for like a whole year. So for a year, I was just drawing comics and drawing the streets of New York city streets for practice and also just to connect with my environment, right and I started getting my comic strips published in small independent newspapers.

The comic strip was called "The Everything is Okay" comic even though there was 9/11 happening and you know, protests against Israel, like pro-Palestinian protest happening like right in Midtown. And war protests, anti-nuclear stuff. I started to do big posters and banners and puppets for radical organizations called like Bread and Puppet Theater and started doing performance art with my friends and like downtown theaters and started to connect with other radical people, like the cartoonist from World War 3 Illustrated. They've been making comics about radical politics since the 80s and so I came in as like one of the younger people.

And so that was kind of like my environment when I was making my first kind of political comics.

Joey Terrill

So where does HIV come into play?

## Carlo Quispe

Well, I was doing some — I mean I wasn't just hanging out with like hetero radicals in their 50s. I was also hanging out with queer, you know party people in Brooklyn, also. Because it was like electroclash, the time was electroclash and we would party at this place called Lux down in Williamsburg. This was like, you know during Bush time, Giuliani time.

You know, we would also gather in this community garden called Le Petit Versailles, which is led by an organization called Allied Productions, and they're like a queer theater performance collective that have a open-air garden where people can go there and meet and put on performances for each other. And we just have it still happening now, every summer they have programming up until Halloween. So they became kind of like another family of artists, even though I was the only cartoonist at the time, in that in that neighborhood. But that's also how I met my friend Mike Diana who was a friend of — who was another cartoonist who was living in the same building as my friends.

They're dancers who have been around since the 80s doing radical work and they've been HIV positive longer than they have... How do I how do they put it? They have been living with HIV longer than —

## Joey Terrill

longer than they've been without HIV. Yeah, like myself.

## Carlo Quispe

Well, they're really amazing artist and they make work out of their lives and their experience. So I feel like I've always kind of — it's always not just been around, but it's also been like part of what we make our work about. And so they responded to some of the gay art, gay comics that I was making.

I took the chapter about the anus, for example, from the Joy of Gay Sex, which is a very old-fashioned kind of how to have gay sex book. And I was just obsessed with the chapter on the anus because he was so obsessed with tenderness and softness and gentleness and I was so — it just seemed to me kind of like a juxtaposition to like all the hardcore porn that we see, you know that also focuses so much in the anus, but my my comic was based on the book, so it was more about like your first time.

On how to prepare for the first time how to attend to your lover's needs. It was more about like a romantic moment as opposed to, you know, being able to take as much as you could kind of attitude, right? So those were kind of like the first comics I made you know, and they of course said, you know put on a rubber, put on a condom, and like this is how you do it. So I draw, I would draw this couple which were actually like kind of twins. It's playing out my twin fantasy. So I would have myself with long hair having sex with myself with short hair and trying to put on the

rubber on too — it was kind of, you know crude drawing that they will we didn't exactly look the same, but similar.

## Joey Terrill

As I'm listening to you, I am thinking that wow. My relationship to comics couldn't be any more different than what yours is, and you know — and I was struck by the fact that you identify as a cartoonist which I you know, I admire and respect. I've always loved cartooning, cartoons, you know growing up as a kid from the old Warner Brother cartoons, you know all the way to you know, more contemporary even adult cartoons, etc.

Yeah. Let me tell me tell you a little bit about you know, my involvement with quote unquote comics. And then I would love for us to maybe talk about the contrast and compare both been these and what we were doing back then in the 80s to your current practice.

So, you know, I consider myself an artist and I've always used different mediums and usually depending upon what my idea was. So I've done serigraphy, silkscreening, paintings, acrylic. I also did what would be considered a prototype zine called Homeboy Beautiful magazine in 1978-79. But, as I inform people, it was it was about a mechanism or a way to show the intersectionality of my gay queer identity and my Chicano identity and where the two intersected. And where they clashed. And you know, and so that's been — so they were like little novellas and they were, they were they were not politically correct. They were very, you know filled with parody, humor. I would take to task the general white population for being indifferent to or thinking that Chicanos didn't exist.

We were invisible in culture at the same time. I was also ridiculing the machismo and homophobia that I found within Chicano culture so, you know, but in in the mid-80s, you know, and of course as you well know, I mean, it was a very different time and you know, AIDS was devastating our community and it was disproportionately devastating people of color and Latinos and I was working in HIV advocacy and I was doing case management for people who were going blind from HIV, but I also you know had friends that were working in certain organizations that had sprung up, were creating in response and there was a program called CORE in West Hollywood that focused on the hustlers that were in West Hollywood good portion of them were Latinos, you know from Central America, from Mexico, from just all different parts some of whom didn't even speak English.

And so the CORE program was very aware that any kind of information about you know, how to protect yourself, how not to transmit HIV, you know, was kind of lost on this population who were most at risk because they were doing sex for survival.

## Carlo Quispe

I understand.

## Joey Terrill

Yeah, a lot of the information that was coming out was you know updates on clinical trials coming up and you know, and then and there was a lot of you know academic or medical language involved, and so that was a turn-off because a lot of these hustlers were not you know, they had very little formal education. And then there was a whole nother realm of information related to HIV and AIDS that was geared towards the gay community and many of these individuals, many of these young men did not identify as gay and many of them had were married or had wives at home and and even children, right? So, you know, it was obvious that everything that was already out there was not really reaching this very at risk group. Right? So the CORE program did this came up with this concept and they got federal funding under prevention for HIV and they created a little comic book called Chicos Modernos —

## Carlo Quispe

Oh I love that. I love that.

## Joey Terrill

So can I just ask you real quick here before I go on, so when you hear that, Chicos Modernos, does that mean anything to you? Does that register? What does that mean?

## Carlo Quispe

I love it so much. Well, okay. So I said that I was from Peru. So in Peru the word 'moderno' actually refers to somebody who is—there is a specific word, but who is both top and bottom, who is verse. Moderno means you're verse. It means that there's more options, right, or that you just have like a more like, you know, more modern attitude. Yeah it because it's expected for Latinos to only be tops, or only admit to being tops, right? Yeah, but then there is the chico moderno, right? Yeah, that will go for it. Right so I kind of love that attitude, especially because I was once just a top right and I got — there's even a comic where I'm like, oh, I just don't feel like I'm gay enough, you know.

## Joey Terrill

Ah, wow. Well, then that's perfect. Because you know at the time when the name was chosen, Chico Modernos, it was sort of understood or known within the Latino and community in Los Angeles that that was a kind of code word or euphemism for you know, being gay or a man who had sex with men or who was —

## Carlo Quispe

I love it.

## Joey Terrill

Right. Yeah, but it was also something that you know people that were unaware could see it and go, 'Oh, modern boys. Okay' You know, and not understand.

## Carlo Quispe

Yeah. Yeah, that's cool. It also reminds me of those magazines that were once just for male youth like Boy's Life or right or something like that. So it takes it back also to that more romantic time where you're just experiencing sex for the first time, right?

## Joey Terrill

So I was attending the Sunset Junction street fair in Silverlake, which was really, you know popular and and it was you know, where all these different communities, you know would set up, you know booths and you'd have you know Thai people, Korean people. All kinds of food great food. All these Latinos in the Silverlake neighborhood.

They would also hire some of the gang members, you know to kind of address their homophobia, to sort of understand and meet with the gay community, to kind of bridge, and they are them as security so they were invested in the festival and while I was there someone handed me a copy of Chicos Modernos and it was you know small, about eight or nine inches, and very compact and it was colorful and I started to read it and it was all about these characters Carlos and Diablo and and they're kind of negotiating through HIV and what was safe or not, you know, so and I loved it immediately.

## Carlo Quispe

It was a comic book?

## Joey Terrill

Yes it was a comic book and it was you know, in Spanish and — for full disclosure, I'm second generation Chicano so I'm sort of pocho, or not sort of, I am pocho. So my comprehension of Spanish is limited. But when I saw the comic book, I loved it and I thought my gosh I should do something like this.

## Carlo Quispe

Okay, so it kind of inspired you to tell your own story.

## Joey Terrill

Well, it inspired me that this seemed like a mechanism, a way for me to put my artistic practice towards my work in HIV advocacy. The two were sort of separate at that point in time. And the artist's name that did the illustrations, his name was Bruce Wrapp, and about five months later, I get a phone call from one of my, at the time good friends, that — there were about 10 of us that all went to Cathedral High School. We were all you know, it was Catholic boys college prep school, but we all kind of came out together and hung out together and some of us are still now lifelong friends, but we called ourselves Las [not sure] .

And so Stephen called me up and said "Hey Joey. Are you familiar with Chicos Modernos?" I said, yeah. Yeah. I love it. And he said Oh, well, he goes, that's me and Bill we did that for CORE. Oh my god. Oh, wow. I had no idea because then I realized that it was said, the name on there was a text by S Munoz. I go oh Steven. And he told me that they're going to do the second edition of it. But that Bruce Wrapp the artist is now too sick. And would you be willing to — I know you're great artist because

## Carlo Quispe

Oh my God, that's such an amazing story.

## Joey Terrill

I was like, I would be honored, I would love to please, and and so I — long story short I ended up doing the next three versions. But one thing that I think that is an interesting contrast to you know, your strategies and regarding sex is that because this was federal funding at time it was subject to the Jesse Helms Amendment, which said that you there was nothing you could do in prevention that would promote or support homosexuality.

So right here, the challenge was looking at this comic book, I'm going to follow these characters. We're going to talk about homo sex, but yet I can't show them being sexual. I can't even show them kissing.

## Carlo Quispe

Oh my god.

## Joey Terrill

So I was extremely frustrated but I also then took it as a challenge and at the time in my head what I thought was, okay, like what would David Lynch do?

Carlo Quispe

That is so fantastic.

Joey Terrill

And you know and the way that David Lynch could take kind of banal images and sort of, you know, have a kind of a more of an evil, provocative subtext. So that's what I did.

Yeah, and then we you know, and these are — and I'll share with you some of the considerations that we had to deal with because I have an impression that these are probably nothing that you have to concern yourself with that. You know, we had a very targeted audience. So it was going to be individuals who A, may not be very fluent even in Spanish, you know didn't have high levels of education.

So they made it very simple that the language would be what we would consider the sixth grade level. Which to me worked well for the characters involved, I just made them like hey regular guys, Latinos hanging out, you know,

Carlo Quispe

Like colloquial.

Joey Terrill

Yeah, and and I did get feedback from people that saw it. You know where I'd be somewhere, I'd be at a club or a bar and we be talking and and then somehow someone had mentioned Chicos Modernos, and I'd go, Yeah. Well, you know, I drew those. And they're like, oh my God, you did. Oh, let me buy you a drink and I'm it was like so cool.

But but they said you know what? I know these characters, these are friends of mine and that that was what was important to me that that the individuals could relate to them it also — we also knew that comic books as well as novellas were something that was part of the culture and so would be a very good mechanism for providing important.

Carlo Quispe

Yeah, I think romance and humor are the things that I definitely want to keep like from the from the spanish, the Latin comics that I've read, right? What what makes them popular is the humor and also there's some sort of romance going on there.

## Joey Terrill

You know what the illustrations and comics that I — the example that I saw of your work was about a character who was very fearful of getting tested for HIV, and I would love to kind of talk to you a little bit about that, based on you know, the fact that I mean — and listen, I love that I can say this now in 2020, and I'm saying it as much as I can when I talk to folks about back in the day. I now say, In the last century what we did —

## Carlo Quispe

In the 1900s

## Joey Terrill

I think it's amazing to me. It sounds it makes me sound like I'm 102 but you know, but —

## Carlo Quispe

That's what my students say is. Mr. Carlo you're from the 1900s, right? I have to say yes. Yes. Yes.

## Joey Terrill

Yes. So I've got a lot. I got a lot that you can learn from me, you know. The thing was that fear of testing was also — and stigma around testing was something that was very prevalent back then obviously. It sounds like it still might be current and then and just before that you address that or speak to.

I'll just share with you that in my current role I work for AIDS Healthcare Foundation. I'm director of global advocacy and partnerships. We're in 45 countries and it's amazing to me how in some of these countries, in Ethiopia, the homophobia, the fear — men who have sex with men, gay men. They cannot even — they don't exist. They're not part of the conversation and it obviously is a hindrance. And many of them are married and they have children and so as the incidence rates in women. So it's amazing to me that here we are in 2020 and this stigma around even testing is still an issue and it sounds like it's you know something that you're a little familiar with.

## Carlo Quispe

Yeah. I mean, I think that there's still — I mean you're naming all these other countries, but there's here in New York. There are people are living in secret and because they are not just hiding, they are afraid of getting sick. And so their instinct is to not get tested, that way they won't know if they're sick. And as long as they can stay in this in this headspace where they don't know if they're positive or not, they can still believe that they are not sick. Like if you're not showing symptoms then don't get tested. Sounds like horrible how they're — Trump is talking

about that about covid? Right? But this mentality is from you know, he is from the 1900s, and his mentality is don't ask don't tell you know.

## Joey Terrill

Yeah, I can't even you know—I could spend 17 hours talking about number 45.

## Carlo Quispe

Yeah, there's such a relationship. And also I was making this comic during the beginning of the epidemic right? And so the idea was, you know, people not being able to get tested, right, people demanding for tests. And so it just made me think so much about what it must have been like back then where people were saying, you know, let's get a cure or let's work on a cocktail or whatever, but they would have to stage these massive protests and get a lot of media attention so that people will take them seriously, even though people were dying, people would ignore it. Right the whole society was in denial about their problem.

## Joey Terrill

Yeah. No Carlo you're absolutely right. It's because of the quote-unquote type of people who were dying. Oh it's queers. It's homos. It's intravenous drug drug addicts drug addicts, you know. It's also Haitians but you know, like nobody cared about the Haitians. But the thing is that—

## Carlo Quispe

It just makes you angry, right? It just makes me so pissed, you know, and and also comics at the time not you know, I think that the comics that were being published at the time we're really trying to portray like the you know — and I'm thinking right now of comics like Wendell, for example, which were like a saving — like it saved my life. It saved my life to see Wendell for the first time because here was someone who was living through what was going on, who was still falling in love, still pursuing his dreams, and surrounded by friends and being happy, even though there was all this stuff going on. He wasn't not ignoring. He was working in this, you know newspaper, queer newspaper where they would have then a chance to talk about these issues in a platonic way.

Even though it was kind of removed. It was not ignoring what was going on. So I kind of wanted to you know, take that kind of positive attitude that kind of, you know innocent character that was also going through it. Like what if like in that universe of like gay people living their life in a comic book kind of way, sitcom kind of way.

What if I could create Paco. Paco is like my my version of Wendell, you know and this is also why I chose to do it as a comic strip, because I have done like zines, I've done, you know murals, painting, posters even like videos right like experimental videos of Latin men in the dark

smoking blowing out smoke from their mouths, you know, kind of like a David Lynch kind of thing, what you're saying is kind of like suggesting these like romantic images of what would usually be considered a dangerous person or a criminal right? Instead here he is as like a heartthrob, right or it just taking that really hard stereotype and just turning him to the side a little bit so that he actually looks hot. Hot and desirable and romantic.

## Joey Terrill

Yeah that, you know getting back to when you had mentioned about, and even today, individuals Latinos who say that you know, no news is good news, that they'd rather not get tested because they don't — I mean I'm struck by how counterintuitive that perspective is because if you are fearful of getting sick, it's better to know your status and then get on antiretroviral therapy and you're not going to get sick. Just like, you know, and I say that and I say that with there's a little bit of anger in there for these young pups that don't quite get that, and I've had these conversations for years and for full disclosure I'm 40 years HIV positive, asymptomatic, never thought I was going to live to see 30, much less, you know, this year I'll be 65. And it's attributed to the antiretroviral therapy that I am on. And you know, and I have — I still know that today there are young queer men, mostly black and Latino in in the United States, who are dying from AIDS which you know is just astounding to me that in 2020.

## Carlo Quispe

With the information out there.

## Joey Terrill

Yeah and that's and that's where I've told people. Well gee, we don't really — I said actually, you know what, you know, if I ask you about Kim Kardashian, you know where to access that information. You know, what just have to Google it, you can find information there.

## Carlo Quispe

Right and these heterosexuals making porn videos. They don't use rubbers either, so it's you know, like if you know, it's like even in the movie Short Bus. Yeah, I don't know if I want to put this out there but if you look in the background I am there doing it with the director's boyfriend.

## Joey Terrill

Okay, I gotta watch that movie again.

## Carlo Quispe

The heterosexual people weren't using rubbers. And like, this is the like the day of the shoot and we are kind of just like looking at each other. I'm like, okay. Well, we're being safe and like we

don't feel like we're putting ourselves in danger, but like you know what message — maybe they're like a couple, you know, maybe they you know got tested or maybe they have a baby. I don't know. But like what's the message that is being put out there right?

I just felt like it was kind of like a conflict. I just always feel like there is like this pressure for homosexuals to you know, be always a hundred percent on the case, but there isn't like this pressure, you know for like heteros to act the same way. It's just like they can get away with it and not have to get the blame, kind of like our community, you know gets gets the blame or it's seen as irresponsible.

You know, my dad, my Peruvian dad tells me be careful every time he says good goodbye. But he's the one who got another woman pregnant and had to marry her. Okay, and so, you know now he has two extra kids. And so I just I'm sick of the hypocrisy.

And so it's interesting, you know having to, you know, do this comic about this subject because I think that what people need to be able to feel safe, to get tested, is they need support and your support around them. That would not only like encourage them to get tested and like know their status, but maybe actually like kind of demand to know their status, you know, someone you know, you know having like a friend who you know is going to put some pressure right, you know on you and kind of make it kind of like an expectation, you know, if these two characters if these people are going to have sex there has to be someone, you know taking that kind of, you know, taking it to the next level, you know, like the let's be more intimate and actually go get tested together.

That was all kind of pre-PrEP. I would go with my lover and get tested first, you know and have to wait a week of not doing anything and then you know decide to do it without condoms, because there's also you know other things that you could get, herpes or whatever. It would it would have to be a decision that was made in the beginning of the relationship, taking that gay relationship, baby relationship, to kind of like adult or 18 and over level, you know having to go get tested with your lover was for me kind of like a rite of passage.

It wasn't just about having sex for the first time and making sure my ass was tender. It was more about like knowing if the other person you know, what did they have? You know, and if they have something how can we manage that so we can still have sex, you know. It's so it's not just you know, so that person has to have support around them. But also like somebody has to be demanding that they know their status. It was just like a rule for the relationship.

## Joey Terrill

I'm sorry. I don't mean to interrupt you, but that strikes me right now that the the comic that I saw, the cartoons that I saw of you, where that Paco or the guy, he's in the club. He's fearful of getting tested and then he's got his friends that are encouraging him and they're there for him.

## Carlo Quispe

Yeah, I mean, I mean, first of all, first of all he had to be able to admit to them that he was afraid.

## Joey Terrill

Yes. Absolutely.

## Carlo Quispe

This is something that I actually was inspired by a book by Samuel R. Delaney who is another queer writer that I love and he wrote a book called *The Madman* in which there was a young Asian college student who was looking for the lover of his mentor, of his teacher. Turns out that his teacher would hook up with homeless men in the park and had this crazy adventure with one homeless man who he called the Madman, Mike the Madman, right? And so he was so afraid of getting HIV that he only performed oral sex on this guy, right? So that book was all about the obsession about dick cheese and like making the foreskin extra large to have extra dick cheese because that was the thing that would like get him off the most, right is to have sex with this guy and then while he was having sex with him, he would turn into some weird sci-fi monster, right so he was having sex with this weird monster and then at the end of the comic he was like, oh I couldn't find Mike for months. But I had this weird digestive problem. I had to go to the hospital. Oh, I turns out I had parasites from eating ass too much right, but he was like in the hospital and like they made they forced him to get tested for HIV in the hospital.

And so he didn't want to get tested. He was afraid that he had something but at the end of the the end of the of this book, which is this crazy romance with his homeless man, he finds out that he is HIV negative. All he has is weird parasites from eating ass. Right? And so this book in a way was like, you know saying there here's his character who was so afraid of getting HIV, was only having oral sex thinking that that would like keep him safe or whatever. Yes, but he was still afraid because every time he would think about this man, he would see him as a Monster who was inserting himself inside of him and stuff. It was crazy.

And so at the end he was like oh but you know, at least now, I know that I'm HIV positive — negative. And so I kind of took that idea I was like, oh, interesting. At the end, you know, you're thinking that he's gonna get something, he's gonna get something, like at the end of my romance comic called *Killer Heights* you think that this boy is going to you know, suffer some great, whatever, some pain for being in love with a man, but no, he just happened to find a kid his own age. Right? I kind of wanted to have that kind of twist ending where you are, you know, so used to reading these comics or these stories where your hero dies at the end, where the you know, the the actual heroism comes from, you know, dying with dignity or something, something horrible like that. And in my comic I wanted the character to live but also have gained something from going through this experience, right. At the end of the comic he's like, yeah, I'm negative but I still have to go back and get tested.

Right? Yeah, so that's what he learned. He became like more brave at least just a little bit, just a little bit more brave.

## Joey Terrill

Well Carlo, you know, one of the things that we haven't touched upon here is the advent of PrEP and I'll tell you as a gay man, and you know forums related to talking about prep and the gay community and MSMs whatever. I actually took the stance that you know what, given the parameters around daily adherence, right, if you all can do daily adherence, go for it, but let's be real about this. In general Americans or people—I don't think it's just Americans, I think you know all kinds of people—we as human beings, we aren't very good with regimens that require daily taking of medication. And the example of that is that you know, how many folks get a prescription for a two week regimen of taking antibiotics and then they feel better and you know, and you've got that left in your medicine chest.

## Carlo Quispe

And yeah, yeah, that's that's also why I wanted to include it to as a part of the conversation for this character. I mean, I always want to be careful about like not like selling this product right, but I kind of wanted it to you know, kind of exist. It's like this, you know other option that is there that you know, now that he knows his status, at least now, he can consider whether he can take it or not. Before that it really didn't even exist as a possibility for him.

## Joey Terrill

Sure.

## Carlo Quispe

So I kind of wanted to mention it as like a conversation topic. You know that like chicos modernos, right, are having now, you know about this is it's not just how people — it's not just a conversation but it's also how people flirt to each other, and seeing how open, you know, or how willing they are to go sexually well —

## Joey Terrill

You know again related to PrEP, the onset of PrEP, you know here in Los Angeles in different community forums and you know webinars and stuff related to PrEP and its roll out. One of the things that I found for me personally a little disturbing and I mentioned it to folks is that I see a certain portion of a young gay or queer generation of men who are now walking talking advertisements for a pharmaceutical industry product right, Truvada and I said, you know what? It's a product just like Coca-Cola.

Just like Cheerios. Just you know Nike and the fact that you're going around saying I'm I'm a prepper or—

Carlo Quispe

I'm a prep whore

Joey Terrill

That you're, the commodification of your identity as a young gay man. Or a gay queer latinx. I said, you know, that's disturbing. I mean, I also found it back in the 70s when everyone was doing the Clone look and everyone was trying to be a clone and I'm like, you know what? I'm sorry. I'm more about the individual, you know, I mean, I appreciate it if you want to dress up like a cowboy no problem, but you know anyway, so that's yeah, that's another yeah.

Carlo Quispe

That's also I guess why I have these people talking about it in my in my comic but I am always aware of like, I don't want to make it into an ad for that. You know, I'm more kind of want to make us I mean — I am aware that by creating a comic book character. I am like reinforcing certain stereotypes namely, you know, the immaturity of young queers or even the ignorance of people of color, but I also want to add to the stereotype that this person can change and can be responsible and is acting out of love.

Joey Terrill

I love it. I love it. No. And I would say to you, I think you know what I know we're getting short on time here, but I was going to say that you know, we've been talking about the differences and the the different centuries, but I think the one thread of connection between what you do and your creative output and what I did back in the day with Chicos Modernos is that I'm pretty sure that we both feel like if there is one person, even one Latino, one queer Latinx or however they identify, MSM, who is able to look at our comic or comics or cartooning and get something that helps them to work through either their fear, their anxiety, their strategy for you know being sexually fulfilled, but you know, limiting your risk and also how you limit the risk for passing not just HIV, but any STDs in the queer community, I mean, you know, that's like I've always said if there was one person who got something out of Chicos Modernos my job is done. You know, I felt that it was an accomplishment. And the small, the small example of your work that I've seen, I feel like we've got that, definitely similar.

Carlo Quispe

Yeah. Yeah. I just, you know want to be able to put something out that people can identify with, that they can connect to, that they can see themselves represented in some way.

## Joey Terrill

You know and then the other, you know, and again I don't mean to make this about myself but I'll just say it again as someone do it do it. — But that someone who's been living with HIV for 40 years, you know when people say oh, you know, because I've met young people that will say oh if I get it, that's okay because I'll just take a pill, just like you.

You know what, I said I'm here today, but I could — if I was on a stage, it would be 20 empty chairs for friends of mine that are no longer here. They took the same medications that I did. They tried the different variations of you know, different cocktails and it would either not work for them or they'd have side effects. And we really don't know why. So why put yourself in the position where you would have to negotiate medication in order to stay alive? I need to constantly check my bone density. I need to check my kidney, my liver. You know, don't go don't get me wrong, I ain't complaining. I love that I'm here today and able to talk to you.

## Carlo Quispe

There is a community of people who prefer not to know, you know, and I was one of those people at a certain time and I said I'm just too afraid but then —

## Joey Terrill

You conquered your fear.

## Carlo Quispe

Well, I was also surrounded by people who are supportive to me, who wanted me to know my status, and demanded that I know it. And luckily I was in that situation where no matter what was to happen, I was still going to be loved and taken care of. But if that wasn't there, I don't know how long it would have taken me to go and you know go through that and get tested.

## Joey Terrill

Carlo I think we're probably we've already used up our time. I just want to say it's been a pleasure having this conversation.

## Carlo Quispe

Yeah, I would love to continue having more conversations.

## Joey Terrill

We can we can arrange that, definitely.

## Alexandro Segade

Hey it's Alexandro again. Just wanted to follow up on something Joey mentioned in his conversation. On the Spanish-language comic *Chicos Modernos*, 1989–90, Joey Terrill employed techniques he developed on the staging ground of *Homeboy Beautiful*, an art zine he made with collaborators including Teddy Sandoval, who died in 1995. Because *Chicos Modernos* was published with support from the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, its depictions of sex were proscribed. But Joey Terrill nevertheless found a way to pursue his *maricónography* – a term coined by Robb Hernandez to describe a “combative, unapologetic, and flamboyant set of tactics” developed by queer Chicanx artists. Terrill draws the faces of the *Chicos Modernos* in an expressive, engaging style that makes them feel like real people who were themselves learning practical lessons on condom use and HIV testing. But it's not all didactics. The characters watch over each other: El Diablo, a homo-homeboy par excellence, has a thing with a closeted married man who doesn't want to have safe sex. Diablos friends intervene, and he realizes he is putting himself and others at risk. In the third issue, El Diablo shares his revelation with undocumented sex workers on his street. He meets Jorge, a new love interest, while passing out safe-sex literature. *Chicos Modernos* imagines a quotidian utopia; its close-knit, mostly gay-male-identified community offers an urgent and direct model for survival.

*Strip AIDS 2020* curated by Paul Sammut is part of a larger exhibition looking at comics and HIV that would have taken place this past summer in NYC. The show is being rescheduled and a new date will be announced in 2021. In the meantime, stay tuned for new podcast episodes each week as we dive into the three other comics that are a part of *Strip AIDS 2020*, and don't forget to check out the rest of the project at [visualaids.org/comics](http://visualaids.org/comics), where you can also see links to other works by the artists' involved.

Finally, I want to give a big thank you on behalf of Visual AIDS to Carlo Quispe and Joey Terrill, as well as Fletcher Aleckson, who recorded and edited this episode, and Paul Sammut, for curating the project.

You can find out more about Visual AIDS' work at their website, [visualaids.org](http://visualaids.org), on facebook at [facebook/visualaids](https://www.facebook.com/visualaids) and on twitter and instagram at [visual\\_AIDS](https://www.instagram.com/visual_AIDS).

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