

TransFigures

Poster Project



Mia Yamamoto

Transwoman,
Asian American, Lawyer

Mia Frances Yamamoto was born in Poston, Arizona, which was an internment camp for Japanese Americans during WWII. Her family returned to Southern California after their release, where they eventually re-settled in East Los Angeles. Like most transgender children, her first stirrings of gender discomfort arose around Kindergarten or First Grade when she realized that she was not developing like her sister and was instead turning into a boy. From then on, she experienced what many transgender children discover - that this was not acceptable anywhere in her family, community or school - and she spent her adolescent and teenage years in a constant battle against this feeling. She graduated Catholic High School, went on to Junior College, from which she promptly flunked out, spent a year working in a grocery store, then re-applied to school, eventually going on to college and graduating in 1966. She thereafter

volunteered for the draft, and after a year in the States, was sent to Vietnam, served from 1967-68 in the 4th Infantry Division, rose to the rank of Specialist 5, was awarded an NDSM, VCM, VSM, and ArCom, and went on to UCLA Law School, founded the Asian American Law Student group and graduated in 1971. She worked for LAFLA for a few years before becoming a public defender, serving there for 10 years, then going into private practice where she continues to the present. She was active as a criminal defense trial lawyer for many years, as well as a community and professional activist, before making the decision to transition. "It's been said that being transgender is something that you are born with, that you fight against your whole life, but which wins in the end," says Mia. She started her transition in 2003, had her surgery in 2005, and has continued in her community and profession ever since. In doing so, she has liberated, educated and integrated the courts, law offices, bar associations, jails and police stations, which she has encountered while finally living the life she was born to live.

TRANSFIGURES POSTER PROJECT



LGBT
Resource Center



The TransFigures Poster Project was launched in 2012 by the LGBT Resource Center at the University of California, Riverside. For more information about the project, for additional trans* resources or to download PDF posters for educational use, please visit out.ucr.edu or architect.lgbtcampus.org.