

Q&A with ...

LGBTQ Center Director Terri Phoenix and Assistant Director Danny DePuy

by Kimberly Fisher

Where are you originally from?

Dixon: I am originally from Indiana, but I have lived all over the Southeast. I have lived in North Carolina since 1985.

DePuy: I'm from California. I went to college at UC Santa Cruz, and I moved to North Carolina in 2000.

Who are some of your favorite LGBTQ activists, writers and/or intellectuals?

Dixon: Michael Warner, author of *Fear of a Queer Planet*, because one of the things that he talks about is how the LGBTQ movement was originally a liberationist movement, a movement dedicated to breaking down systems of oppression. I like how he articulates how the movement lost momentum when it took up identity politics, and struggled to gain rights for certain identity categories at the exclusion of others.

DePuy: Bettina Aptheker. She is an activist and professor at UC Santa Cruz. I guess you can say she grew up in an activist household. Her father did a lot of work on voter registration. At UC Santa Cruz she teaches a 500-person class and comes out on the first day of class. She uses personal narrative as a tool to educate others. Her writings and lectures are very accessible.

I would also have to say bell hooks. She made an important contribution to feminism. She called a lot of attention to the gaps in feminist theory.

What led you to become an activist, and how do you balance your role as both an activist and a University administrator?

Dixon: I came out in high school in a small town in South Georgia. As you might imagine, that wasn't well received. I was also part of the foster care system and, as you can imagine, that wasn't very well received either. When I came to college I wanted to know how to make the world better. When I was at East Carolina we started our own underground LGBTQ student organization. I also got involved in [the] Anti-Apartheid [Movement], Act-Up and Queer Nation. Since then, I have volunteered extensively with non-profit organizations that work with LGBTQ youth. To be of service full time to LGBTQ folks was a dream come true. Sometimes it's hard to balance the Queer Nation side of me with the bureaucratic nation of the University. I have to constantly balance staying true with working effectively within the system that I am in.

DePuy: I grew up in an environment where queerness wasn't an assessable identity. I didn't really have an LGBTQ model, nor tools to reconceptualize what I had learned. I came out during college. I felt like it was really important to create more space for people outside of the dominate, heteronormative society. When I moved here I got together with a group of people that were like-minded and used performance as a tool of social change and education. Together we formed the political performance group, the Cuntry Kings. The cool thing about the Cuntry Kings is that it is nonhierarchical and uses a