

[SUGGESTIVE SQUEAKING SOUNDS]

JIMMY CARPER: The following program contains language or images of a Frank or sensitive nature, which may be considered objectionable by some. Listener discretion is advised.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Oh, yes, you've tuned into *After Hours*, a continuing tradition on KPFT Houston, 90.1 FM. The crew of *After Hours* is ready to bring you news, interviews, and music geared for gay and lesbian people. Here at *After Hours*, we may be diverse, but we have one thing in common. We are out of the closet and urge everyone to come out of their closets.

That means standing up for yourself, taking responsibility for your own life, and being proud of who you are. Realistically, we know not everyone can do that because of age, job, or frame of mind. That's OK. We're here for you, too. So sit back, relax, and enjoy this week's edition of *After Hours*.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SARAH Welcome to *After Hours*, a continuing tradition in Houston.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: That's right. *After Hours*, queer radio with attitude and tonight we have with us.

SARAH I'm Sarah DePalma.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: As host, and as a co-host with her, I'm Jimmy Carper.

SARAH We have really got a packed show. If you're a person who does not like to be bored, stick around. We promise not

DEPALMA: to bore you.

JIMMY CARPER: Hey, hey.

SARAH First of all, we're going to take an in-depth look at the subject of gender, not necessarily transgender, but gender

DEPALMA: across the board on a very broad basis. No pun intended, here.

JIMMY CARPER: Ooh.

SARAH We'll be asking such questions as, are there two and only two genders? Is it true that a female is a person with a

DEPALMA: vagina and a male is a person with a penis? If you think you know the answer, stick around. We may surprise you.

Must everyone be classified as one gender or another? Just thought that we would pique your curiosity. As a focus of the discussion, we're going to use an interview with the author of *Gender Outlaw On Men, Women, and The Rest of Us*, Kate Bornstein.

Honey, let me tell you. This woman has got it together.

JIMMY CARPER: I see.

SARAH We had so much fun doing the interview, that we forgot to shut the tape off.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: [LAUGHS]. That can be a problem.

SARAH Needless to say, it took a little bit of editing, but we had a good time. And I think the audience will sense that fact

DEPALMA: that we're having fun. We're also going to use a couple of other materials. One is from a book that's not even out yet. It's from a book by Martine Rothblatt called *The Apartheid of Sex*.

JIMMY CARPER: Whoa.

SARAH And we'll let that percolate a little bit. Think about what that can mean.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah, think about all of this. I've always thought, OK, there's female and male.

SARAH Not necessarily.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Guess not.

SARAH We're going to blur those distinctions tonight.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: OK, that's what we're here for.

SARAH We'll also be talking a little bit about a book called, *Transgender Nation* by Gordon McKenzie. And we'll be talking

DEPALMA: about these people because they're both going to be guests in future shows.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, cool.

SARAH So, we're going to the Queer Music Zone. We'll have regular features and stick around.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah, we've got community events and all of that kind of good stuff. Judy is giving us-- Judy, our newscaster, has provided us with all kinds of goodies that we'll be talking about. And let's see, Sarah G is in the house answering the phones, at 526-5738. And they are ringing as we speak.

Tonight, well, this whole month, December. This is, of course, a very special month because of the solstice, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, whatever type of persuasion you are or whatever you like to celebrate, whether you're pagan or Christian or Jew or whatever, this is the month for it.

And it seems that a lot of religions, a lot of traditions have borrowed from each other, which is really kind of nice.

SARAH It is kind of nice. I like that.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah, I do like that. Kwanzaa, I think, is the best for doing that. They seem to have borrowed from here and there. Actually, that's the way it looks like on the outside looking in. I'm not a Kwanzaa expert by a long shot.

SARAH I'm going to make Newt Gingrich mad. There is no such thing as a religious right. There is what works. And I like
DEPALMA: it.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, absolutely.

SARAH I like all the diversity. I think that's what makes-- I think it's what makes the season fun.
DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: I do too. I do too. And one of the special things going on tonight, was a concert downtown by the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. I missed it because Stanley came into town, and I had to pick him up. So I didn't get to see it this year, hear it this year, but it's always wonderful. Always wonderfully diverse music from all kinds of different backgrounds Jewish, Black, African, and traditional kind of Christmas music that you expect.

And last year, the Gay Men's Chorus, did a special tape just for us of something that they wish, not only for this month, but every month and every day of the year. And I'd like to play it for you right now, as we get ready to roll into *After Hours* for December the 10th.

SARAH Yeah, happy holidays, y'all.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Y'all and, of course, during the QMZ, we'll be playing some special Christmas music.

SARAH Oh, good, queer Christmas music.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Queer Christmas music.

SARAH Oh, I like that already.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Music that people look forward to every year. As a matter of fact, *After Hours* will be with you on Christmas Eve. And we'll be doing lots of queer Christmas carols. But for right now, Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. And what they wish for you.

And that was the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. *We Need a Little Christmas* and isn't that true? I think we do need a little Christmas, even if you are not a Christian, and you don't know what it is that you're celebrating.

SARAH Oh, yeah, we were just talking about that. To me, it's the decorations and the lights and the get-togethers and seeing people, and writing to people, writing Christmas cards to people you haven't thought about since last year. And remember, fondly, throughout your life. And all that kind of warm fuzzy stuff.

We sort of make it a little pilgrimage. We go to the downtown area and take a look at the lights downtown.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, yes.

SARAH Go over by the Galleria and check out the stuff.
DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Some of the best lights in town, you can find in Hispanic neighborhoods.

SARAH Really.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Some of the most beautiful lighting displays are in Hispanic neighborhoods, yeah.

SARAH I want to talk about some upcoming shows, first of all. And I want to talk about one in particular. Let's talk about

DEPALMA: the next two. Let's talk January in February.

JIMMY CARPER: OK.

SARAH First of all, in January, we're going to do something. I don't know if it's ever been done before. And that is we're

DEPALMA: going to, specifically, talk about cross-dressing.

JIMMY CARPER: OK.

SARAH Now cross-dressing is different from transsexual.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Yes it is.

SARAH We've talked and.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: We've talked a little bit about this because I, as a member of the gay and lesbian switchboard, I talk with a lot of straight men who are cross-dressers.

SARAH Right, well, I taped an interview with Linda and Cynthia Phillips, who run the Texas Tea Party. It's the largest

DEPALMA: gathering of cross-dressers in North America.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh.

SARAH And that interview is-- first of all, they're old friends, so it was an easy interview to tape. But in addition to that,

DEPALMA: it's very informative. And then we're going to have Jackie Thorn here in studio.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, good. I haven't seen Jackie in a long time.

SARAH Well, Jackie's uniquely qualified to talk about cross-dressing because she has a foot in each camp. The gay and

DEPALMA: non-gay cross-dressers. So we'll be able to talk about that. And I don't know if that-- that's not a subject comes up a lot. And they make up, probably, in numbers, the largest group of the transgender community, in actual numbers.

Then in February, I really want to talk about this. Mark this down on your calendar. This is something really unique. Dr. Collier Cole, who runs the Rosenberg Clinic in Galveston, allowed me to get out and tape an interview with him. It's the first interview he has given in a year and a half.

JIMMY CARPER: Wow.

SARAH So if you were thinking you may be transsexual and you want the facts, this is the show to listen to. But more
DEPALMA: than that, he allowed me to go back down the following weekend. And tape the women who were in the program. There are some incredibly inspiring stories in here.

JIMMY CARPER: Now, fill us in a little bit because when I think of gender clinics, I think, OK. I know that the one in Galveston, Rosenberg, or wherever you're talking about, is really famous. And I don't know how many others there are across the country.

SARAH Very few.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: That's what I'm thinking.

SARAH Very few.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: We're really a hub here.

SARAH I've said this before, and it's true. Houston is probably the best place in the country to be transgendered. It really
DEPALMA: is.

JIMMY CARPER: We never think of it that way.

SARAH We have more out political leaders, and I'm not talking about me or Phyllis, I'm talking about people outside of
DEPALMA: us. We have more people who are out in public than any other city in the country, outside of San Francisco, probably. We have more people that are out, and you wouldn't expect that in a conservative city like Houston.

JIMMY CARPER: That's right.

SARAH That's true. We're 60 miles from one of the best gender clinics in the country.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: See.

SARAH And the stories these women have to tell about how they came to realize that they were transsexuals. How they
DEPALMA: attacked their problem. And how they led up to surgery. There are interviews with people who ended up in lesbian couples. There are people who ended up in straight relationships.

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah, that's all very confusing to me. How that happens or what happens.

SARAH They're going to talk about that. And it's important. I don't know that it's ever been done before where
DEPALMA: transsexuals get to explain in their own words. Geraldo doesn't explain this.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, please, yes.

SARAH This is not Dr. Cole explaining it. The women get to explain it for themselves.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: That's a good idea.

SARAH So stick around for that. Put that on your calendar for February,

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: February, 2nd week in February.

SARAH And I would like to take a few minutes and talk about what's going on this past year.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Sure.

SARAH And let's talk about what's going to happen for the new year.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: OK.

SARAH 1994, I think, is going to be remembered in Houston as the year that Houston transgender people led the way,

DEPALMA: not just in Houston, but throughout the country.

JIMMY CARPER: How do you mean?

SARAH Well, It's Time America, the political lobbying organization, was born here in Houston. And we're growing like

DEPALMA: crazy. Just this last week, we added Georgia, and West Virginia to the list of states joining It's Time America.

JIMMY CARPER: Wow.

SARAH Jerry Falwell's got to love that.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: (LAUGHING) I can imagine.

SARAH And I'm particularly interested in the one in Georgia because it's formed up at Georgia Tech, which is the home

DEPALMA: territory of Newt Gingrich.

JIMMY CARPER: [LAUGHS].

SARAH Good old Newt, N-O-O-T.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: As Molly Ivins says,

SARAH I always thought Newt was a frog.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Well.

SARAH This was the year when, not one, but numerous transgendered activists turned up in activities all over the city

DEPALMA: and made their influence's felt. Houston became the home of the first radio show in the country produced by a transgendered person for a transgendered community.

JIMMY CARPER: Ta-dah.

SARAH We're still the only one.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: That's amazing to me.

SARAH We're still the only one.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: I don't understand that.

SARAH The law conference branched out and it's become truly international. This year, they went to England. They're

DEPALMA: going to Helsinki, Finland. All this is coming out of Houston. More people have made themselves available to speak to University classes, than at any time ever in the city.

So I think that's amazing. This is conservative Houston. And look at what we're doing. You really ought to be proud. And I'd like to talk a little bit about the future.

JIMMY CARPER: OK.

SARAH This past week, this past Monday, I was invited to go to a political dinner held by The League of Women Voters.

DEPALMA: For the first time ever, we had five, count them, five transgendered activists who turned up.

JIMMY CARPER: Hey.

SARAH I wish you could have been there to see some of this. For most of the people, this was their first political thing

DEPALMA: ever. And it was great. These two girls in particular, named Wendy and Denise, who thank God didn't know any better, simply walked over to Robert Eckels, our new Republican commissioner. And said, you know what, we're transgendered and we want to talk to you.

[LAUGHTER]

JIMMY CARPER: Whoa.

SARAH I mean, just straight out. And Robert Eckels' eyes got the size of silver dollars. That was so neat to watch that.

DEPALMA: Dean McKellar walked over to a couple of legislators, just stuck out her hand and said, we're going to talk.

JIMMY CARPER: Well, when you take the mystery out of it, then it's not horrible or scary anymore.

SARAH And that's the way it is with me.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: That's it.

SARAH It's not just two of us, anymore. That's so exciting to me.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: And there are more people out there.

SARAH Yes,

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: And sometimes I wish we were doing TV, so people could see you and say, gosh, OK, well there's a middle aged woman there. You know and

SARAH As Phyllis explained to a legislator, the other day, see, here's a plump middle-aged lady, and most of us look like
DEPALMA: this. Yes.

JIMMY CARPER: [LAUGHS].

SARAH I thought, thank you so much, Phyllis. Deborah Danberg is sponsoring our name change and gender change law.
DEPALMA: We thank Debra for that. But more importantly, for the first time, Sinfonia Thompson, who heads the Judiciary Committee, has agreed to take it in her committee. That means it may actually be reported out to the floor of the House for the first time ever.

JIMMY CARPER: Whoa, boy.

SARAH We have a chance to actually get this passed.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Just getting it out on the floor, though, was exciting, don't you think?

SARAH It's a funny thing about this. We had been working on this bill now for the longest time. And we tried two or three
DEPALMA: different approaches. And no one seemed real interested.

So just on a hunch, I sat down with Sinfonia Thompson, and said, let me explain this to you in terms a politician is going to understand. If you get the heck out of our way, we'll become taxpayers.

JIMMY CARPER: There you go.

SARAH She was interested after that.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Well sure.

SARAH That was the answer. So that's real exciting. I want to thank Ray Hill and Annise Parker.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: OK.

SARAH Ray Hill and Annise Parker have been, very quietly, working behind the scenes on behalf of the transgender
DEPALMA: community.

JIMMY CARPER: As they have been doing for years.

SARAH Yeah, I think since God created water.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Yes, they have been.

SARAH And it is almost a certainty, now, that the rules in the jail will be changed. Transgender people will no longer be
DEPALMA: put into the general population. They'll be put in isolation tanks. That means you may come out of there alive.

JIMMY CARPER: That's good. That's good.

SARAH That's a big deal.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Now, transgendered and--

SARAH The policy for people with AIDS is also changing.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: OK.

SARAH In the past, people with AIDS were put into the general population. Well, if you know anything about jails, then

DEPALMA: you probably also know that infectious disease is a serious problem, especially tuberculosis.

JIMMY CARPER: Sure.

SARAH The problem was not the general population catching AIDS.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: No.

SARAH The problem is people with AIDS catching tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Yes, yes.

SARAH And they're even going to change the terminology. Annise explained this today. I never would have thought of

DEPALMA: this. They used to give you a wristband. And the wristband had a letter A. Well, it didn't really mean anything. It was just a letter of the alphabet. But the prisoners said, oh, people with AIDS.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh brother.

SARAH That never would have occurred to me in a zillion years.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: [LAUGHS].

SARAH So they're going to change the terminology. Silly stuff but I'll tell you something, Ray Hill and Annise Parker do

DEPALMA: more stuff behind the scenes than any two people I know. They're underappreciated for what they do.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, I know.

SARAH They really are.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: We were just talking, before the show, and Annise is on the police board.

SARAH She's on an ethics committee for the police, I believe.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: And all I ever hear is, people bitching to Annise about what the police are doing. Like she's in charge or something. I hardly ever hear anybody saying, gee, thanks Annise for working or doing this or being on this board. All I ever hear, is the bitching.

SARAH Well, I told her thank you. I made a call just specifically to say thank you.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Good.

SARAH I want to say something about-- you brought up a point. I get probably 10 to 12 phone calls a month from people

DEPALMA: who have complaints about the police, transgender people, drag queens, straight people, all sorts.

And I always tell them the same thing. The police will take no action, unless you put it in writing. You have to put it in writing. You have to tell me who, what, when, where, and how. To this point, in almost six months, I have not received one single written complaint.

JIMMY CARPER: See.

SARAH Nothing is ever going to change.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: That's right.

SARAH If you won't stand up for yourself.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: That's exactly right. And the way the police look at it, what problem? We don't have a problem here.

SARAH Their attitude is if it in writing, it didn't happen.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: That's exactly it.

SARAH It's that simple. And I want--

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: And almost any night of the week, you can be on lower Westheimer and see a cross-dressed person being stopped by police for some reason.

SARAH Well, the calls that I get that I don't know what to do with them. Often, they're heterosexual cross-dressers.

DEPALMA: Often, they're married.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh.

SARAH They get stopped by a cop for some minor thing. They get stopped on a traffic offence. And the cop, really, has

DEPALMA: been pretty polite to them. The cop had not given them a bad time. They just were stopped for a typical offense anyone would get stopped for.

But then these cross-dressers will call me and say, what if that becomes public? I say, well, why would the police do that?

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah.

SARAH It's really not true that the police are out to get people. I really don't think that.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: They have better things to do. And bigger fish to fry. And all of those other things, yes.

SARAH But if they do step out of line, and sometimes they do, we have to have it in writing, or we can't do squat.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: That's exactly right. That's the only way we get things changed. There are lots of good police out there. There are a few that are not so good.

SARAH You mean you mean like the 30 cars that were in the police chase up Interstate 45 [LAUGHS].

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Yes. Oh, brother.

SARAH I'd like to say some thank yous. It's Christmas time. I want to say some thank yous to people.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Sure.

SARAH Well, first of all, of course, I've already said thank you to Ray and Annise. But I want to say thank you to the

DEPALMA: activists out there who have gotten up the courage this year to come out. When we went to Second Baptist Church, we weren't alone. For the first time, we had people who came with us.

JIMMY CARPER: Nice.

SARAH When we went to the legislature, different people, but more came with us.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Good.

SARAH We were just recently, I say we, Phyllis Frye and myself and several other people, were just recently interviewed

DEPALMA: for *Esquire* magazine for an issue that'll be coming out in March. Again, people were willing to come out and talk publicly. That's amazing.

JIMMY CARPER: That's wonderful.

SARAH So thank you to those people out there. And I want to thank you.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Me?

SARAH Yes, I don't know if you realize what an impact the show is beginning to have in our community. I'm getting

DEPALMA: phone calls from around the country from people wanting to know how to get copies of this show.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh.

SARAH Word has gotten out. Authors are calling us. I don't have to call them. They're calling me and say, what do I have to do to get on the show?

JIMMY CARPER: Well, the whole reason that I do this show, is because I was once 15. And that was way back in the '60s. And there weren't any books. And there weren't any bars where I grew up. And there weren't any radio shows. And I thought I was the only one.

And I thought, if I can work on this show and reach people so that they know that they're not the only one. And then I looked around, and I said, well, hey, what about all the other people in the queer community too? We've got bisexuals. We got transgenders. And they're not the only ones.

And when you're sitting at home in Rosenberg, and you know that you're a cross-dresser, or that you're in the wrong body, you may think you're the only one out there. And that's why we're here every Saturday night to tell you, you've got friends. And you've got places that you can go, and things that can happen to make your life better.

SARAH Well, still, there are people who preach. And there are people who say that they believe stuff. And then there are people who actually practice what they preach. And you're one of those people. I'm proud to know you. So thank you very much.

JIMMY CARPER: You're welcome. Thank you.

SARAH Well, why don't we say.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Well.

SARAH What do you say we go to some music.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: I think so.

SARAH Instead of Kate Bornstein.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: OK, OK, I want to. I'm going to play some Christmas stuff later on. But right now this is just one of the most requested pieces of music on *After Hours*. It's by a lesbian named Horse. And the group is named Horse. And this is off of their first album. It's called *And She Smiled*,

Horse, *And She Smiled*. Whoa. Sorry about that.

SARAH That's called live radio.

DEPALMA:

JIMMY CARPER: Yes it is.

SARAH Before we go into Kate Bornstein, I'd like to do a little setup. Because Kate Bornstein espouses ideas that may be completely foreign, I would like to start out with a poem. This poem was written by a man called David Bergman. And it seems like this was the perfect setup for Kate Bornstein.

"I was never the one to spot him walking slowly up the street pulling his yellow wagon. It was always a brother or sister who would race home with the news. Then everything spun into action, like gulls at low tide.

Mother would shoo the children from the yard and hide us out of danger in the living room, warning with harsh whispers, not to peek from the windows and knowing we would anyway, tracking the blueberry man across the porch to where he knocked at the kitchen door.

Grandfather greeted him. Mother said she was afraid. But I think she was jealous. For though I was five or six, I knew I'd never see such beautiful hair again. Hair like a storybook princess, great golden skeins falling halfway down his back.

And such eyes, freaked like a robin's egg and bobbing beneath the mascara waves of lashes. I remember the victory-red lips unfurling like a flag when he spoke and the frilly shirt. My brothers giggled nervously, but I wasn't scared. I wanted to pull the chiffon curtains back and speak, but what would I say?

That I knew what it was to be alone. That I had heard my own family scamper with trepidation from my door when I was quarantined with scarlet fever, and no one but my mother was allowed into my room. I could have said, I'm only a child, but certain to end an outcast, too.

Still, I said nothing, except once, a weak goodbye for which I was roundly scolded. I used to ride my bike to his house, a tiny cabin covered with angry brambles and the hiss of intriguing bees, hoping we'd meet. But he stayed inside during the day when he wasn't peddling the wares he gathered at night.

One sleepless dawn, I saw him coming home with a kerosene lantern in one hand and a silvery pail in the other. Mother washed his berries twice to cleanse them of his memory, as if he communicated with his touch the fearful urge to dress in women's clothing. For dessert, she'd douse the fruit with milk or pile them on peaks of sour cream. Chubby mountain climbers in the snow. My brothers ate them greedily.

But when everyone had sat at the table, I would still be seated, savoring the sweet juice and the delicate flesh he had brought me."

JIMMY CARPER: Ah, The blueberry man.

SARAH The blueberry man. And that brings us to Kate Bornstein. Those of you who are regular listeners to this program, **DEPALMA:** already know that I have led several lives in the attempt to finally reach a place of peace.

In my life as a male, I was married for eight years and have a daughter from that relationship. Lived as a gay male in a relationship that ended, only, due to his death in an auto accident. Began my transition from male to female while still an active member of Queer Nation.

Live in a relationship with a female that I refuse to label as anything other than loving. And now I chair It's Time Texas, a political lobbying organization for transgendered people. But, gentle listeners, that background pales by comparison to our guest this evening.

Al Bornstein worked as a salesman for IBM. Once served as first mate of a yacht owned by the Church of Scientology, and also fathered a daughter. Today, she is a lesbian author and playwright, who has appeared on many of the television talk shows. She is currently in a relationship with David Harrison.

Like many other aspects of her life, this has been a fluid situation, which began as a lesbian S&M relationship, and is now a work in progress, since David is a female to male transsexual.

With this information established, it should come as no surprise that Kate is speaking with us today, about her book, appropriately titled, *Gender Outlaw, on Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*. Kate Bornstein, welcome to our show.

KATE [LAUGHS] After that introduction, I think my head is spinning from your history, girl, thanks a lot.

BORNSTEIN:

SARAH Actually, our backgrounds are very similar. I think you'll be surprised as we go along here. And actually, that leads into the first question. Before I get into the book, I really got to ask you about this background. How does one get from being a nice white Jewish boy with male privilege, to the Church of Scientology, to where you are now? How does all that happen?

KATE [LAUGHS] You got to be dissatisfied with the way the world gets a hold on you. You got to be really dissatisfied with people who want to hold you in one place and put you under a microscope. And say, there, we've got it. And it's never going to change.

I never liked being held down in one place, Sarah. And I found the one place I was consistently held down, was in terms of gender and sexuality. No matter what I did, I could throw off the money I had growing up in an upper-middle-class home in New Jersey and live as a starving artist. That's fine. I could explore all kinds of stuff.

But people would still point and say, boy. Or now, as they do, they try and point and say, girl. And I say, nope, neither.

SARAH [LAUGHS] Yeah, my answer usually is, yes.

DEPALMA:

KATE [LAUGHS] I think the better answer, for me, is no. I used to say yes, too. And now they go, male or female? I go, no, neither. I think people can be outside of those two. I think those are two valid genders. And I wouldn't be upset with anybody being male or being female. But I think it's really a matter of choice.

SARAH Well, that leads me to the first question here. I have to tell you, first of all, that I absolutely ran through your book. I have seldom read a book that just made me go crazy. I can't put this down. I have to go through all of this.

I have to start by, I was trying to figure out a way that I could introduce some of your concepts in a way people would understand. And I want to use the quote from the book. You said, "once upon a time, someone drew a line in the Sands of culture, and proclaimed with great importance. On this side, you are a man. On the other side, you are a woman. It's time for the winds of change to blow that line away."

Well, Kate Bornstein, why do we need to be one or the other, male or female?

KATE That's the question I've not been able to come up with an answer to. I think socially, and there's a new book that's going to be coming out and I just finished reading an advanced copy of it by Martine Rothblatt called *The Apartheid of Sex*.

And she makes an excellent case of how gender was, originally how we were, originally, male and female for procreation purposes. And basically, to ensure the survival of the species so that there would be enough genes from one pool and enough genes from another pool to overcome bacteria, basically.

And so that there were sperm makers and egg bearers. And that's how the race evolved. But we have come so far, haven't we, Sarah? We've come so far beyond that. And this is the point that Martine makes in her book, *Apartheid of Sex*, which as soon as it comes out, buy it. It's a brilliant book.

We've come so far that we don't need that anymore. We have enough biotechnology to overcome a lot of this stuff. And, yes, we still need to have babes and stuff. And that's going to go on for a long time, I would imagine. I can't foresee an end to that.

But what is the necessity of calling somebody male and calling somebody female? What is the social necessity for that anymore? Really.

SARAH Well, it's interesting. Here in Houston, we, of course, are in the middle of the Bible belt. And people here insist that girls wear pink. Boys wear blue. And you are strictly one or the other.

I grew up in a Pentecostal background, which should tell you something about me, perhaps. And I was raised in the idea that there were male jobs and female jobs. I mean, not just male or female roles but jobs. The men mow the lawn, and the women made lemonade. That sort of thing.

So I'd like to think we've come a long way from that. I'm not sure.

KATE Well, here's a very interesting thing. You're mentioning a couple of things. Let me just quickly say, that in the **BORNSTEIN:** 1930s, it was quite the reverse. Boys were dressed, little infant boys, were dressed in a very manly pink while girls wore a dainty blue. That was the feeling then. Boys wore pink and girls were blue. And that was the way it was. And a boy would never be caught dead wearing blue. That would be a sissy. So that's changed, obviously.

Also, in terms of the Bible, and any great religious text, and I really love the Bible. I really do. There's so much great truth and comfort in that. But the Bible very, very, very carefully says what men do, what women do, what men shouldn't do, what women shouldn't do.

But the Bible never says what is a man. The Bible never says what is a woman, never ever, ever. They just assume we know. And it's that assumption, isn't it. It's like, I understand a lot of your listeners are gay and lesbian. It's the same assumption that heterosexual people make, that we're all heterosexual.

Well, maybe not. And what gays and lesbians have done that's so great in this culture, is challenged that assumption to the very core and entered it firmly into the culture that, no, we cannot assume any longer that people are naturally heterosexual.

Well, here you and I are, Sarah. And you and I are saying, and a lot of people with us, you can't assume we're male or female, either, not unless you really can say, what is a man? What is a woman?

And you can ask 10 people that question, and they won't agree.

SARAH It's very interesting. I happened to be in the hospital. I guess it was about a year and a half ago, now. And they put me in the male ward. And I was just furious with them. And they said, well, our policy is, that you go in the ward by your genitals.

KATE Oh, God.

BORNSTEIN:

SARAH And I thought, what? And suddenly it occurred to me, that they in fact, really did define male and female in terms of, we are what is or is not between our legs, very scary.

KATE Yeah, and by extension, what's even scarier, is what is between our legs is going to dictate how we think. Duh, I mean, women have been saying this forever. That biology is not destiny. Keep your laws off my body.

And we're just saying the same thing. We're taking-- the inevitable new step in feminism is us. We're saying, no, biology is not only destiny, not only not destiny, it is totally irrelevant.

What is between our legs, does not dictate how we're going to behave in life, does not dictate our math skills, does not dictate our verbal skills. That's a whole other set of genes.

SARAH I want to go back to your book, which by the way, folks, is called *Gender Outlaw*. In the book, you have a section called the rule book. Now, with my background, I was really interested in this.

KATE [LAUGHS]

BORNSTEIN:

SARAH And you said, in the book, "and then I found out gender can have fluidity, which which is quite different from ambiguity." I love the concept of gender fluidity. Tell the listeners a little bit about what you mean by that.

KATE OK, well I need to backtrack a little bit and go over what gender ambiguity is, and just recap what we've been talking about. And what I would say gender ambiguity is, you don't have to be Sylvester Stallone or Madonna. You can be something outside of that.

You can be a she-male. You can be a drag queen. You can be a butch dyke. These are all genders. You can be a top butch dyke, bottom butch dyke. These are all different genders. Gender is simply a word that means classification. That's what the word means. That's all it means. It's a way to classify people.

And people like to insist that there are only two classes, male and female. Well, what else in nature is two, and only two, and bipolar opposites at that? Nothing. OK, but we insist that gender is two and only two. OK, fine. I say, that gender is more ambiguous than that. There's a lot more ways to express identity than some biblical-- and I know I'm getting in trouble here in the Bible belt here.

But some mandate, some cultural mandate, that says you can only be two. So I say gender is ambiguous. More than that, I think that gender expression, how we Express ourselves in a gendered way. And hearing your story, Sarah, just confirms this.

We grow. Don't we? We change. When I meet somebody, I am absolutely fascinated about how they're presenting themselves. And I find myself shifting in order to accommodate their presence. And so my gender-- I identify mostly as a femme bottom. But if I meet some amazing femme bottom, the top in me is going to come out. Whoa, girl.

SARAH [LAUGHS].

DEPALMA:

KATE You know, and so I kind of shift. It's a dance, isn't it. And I think that this fluidity. This is something that allows us to express ourselves more fully in the moment. Oh, God, I'm sounding so New Age.

SARAH [LAUGHS].

DEPALMA:

KATE But it's just that freedom to be what you are when you are it. And not to say, OK, well, now, Kate, we got it. **BORNSTEIN:** You're a transsexual lesbian. Well, maybe I'm not. I mean, I don't know. That's what I'm being today. I don't know what I'm going to be tomorrow.

SARAH I occasionally go and speak to classes at various universities here in Houston.

DEPALMA:

KATE Meet the queer?

BORNSTEIN:

SARAH Oh, well, I'm sort of the resident freak. At least that's the way it starts out. And by the end of the class, they usually have come to a new idea.

But the point that I was going to make, is that I will say to them, what I'd like to think I have done with my life, is I have taken those things that I like about being female. Those things that I like about being male. Incorporated them together and the result is called a person, not male or female, a person. And then I watch their eyes roll.

KATE Right.

BORNSTEIN:

SARAH They just can't deal with that idea. They seem to believe that, oh, no, you're a male person or a female person.

DEPALMA: Since when?

KATE Right, and I think that the fact that we're shaking up that assumption. The fact that there's people listening here going, oh, jeez, come on. I'm a guy or I'm a girl, and that's that. Well, some people don't go to bed at night knowing that. That's all we're saying.

And the fact that we don't and the fact that gender isn't questioned in this culture, alone, should make people curious.

SARAH Well that brings me to another question that's near and dear to my heart, as a transgender-rights activist, here. I loved your chapter which was called, Which Outlaws. And you talked about, you said, "transsexuals presenting themselves for therapy in this culture, are channeled through a system which labels them as having a disease, transsexuality, for which the therapy is to lie, hide, or otherwise remain silent."

Now, it's ironic because I am interviewing a gender therapist tomorrow. And it is part of his therapy to do precisely what you've said. As a transgender activist, though, it makes it impossible, sometimes, for me to draw 20 people together and say, here's what we need to do. Talk a little bit about why you think transsexuals are so afraid of one another.

KATE I think, for two major reasons. I think this therapeutic lie, which, incidentally, since the publication of the book, I have run into some therapists who don't do that. And in the preface to the new edition, I'm saying that. That it's not a universal thing. I want a bit fanatic on that.

SARAH [LAUGHS].

DEPALMA:

KATE I did, and I think that any transgendered person or anyone with issues of transgender, should interview therapists and make sure that they're not recommending that we lie. What we're told is, we go into this therapy. And we say, look, I don't think I'm a guy. And we're told, oh, then you're a woman.

And we're told that, in order to be in this world healthy, we have to be women and never say we were men. Never say that I lived my first 34 years as a guy. What am I supposed to do with that? What kind of therapy is that to tell someone to negate 34 years of their life and pretend it never happened?

I was told by peer groups, right, counseling peer groups, to say things like, well, when I was a little girl, I would blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I was never a little girl, Sarah. I was a little boy. I was a confused little boy, but I was trying valiantly to be little boy because I figured that's what I had to try and appear like, otherwise, I'd get stoned, literally, with rocks.

But as an adult, to tell someone to lie. That's our therapy. Transsexuality is the only condition in the culture, for which the therapy, almost universally, is to lie. Is to say, don't tell anyone you're transsexual. You're a woman now. Be very satisfied with that. Nuh, unh, unh, unh.