

JIMMY CARPER: Yes, that was, first of all, "Give And Take" by Pink, local talent, and by even more local talent, Diverse House doing "Who Knows". And we just happen to have two members of Diverse House right here in the house, Tranae Chardon and Brenda.

TRANAE Hi.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: Brenda has a last name, I know, but I don't know it.

BRENDA It's Lachance.

LACHANCE:

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, Lachance. Oh.

BRENDA Brenda Lachance.

LACHANCE:

JIMMY CARPER: Brenda Lachance.

TRANAE [INAUDIBLE]

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah, see.

TRANAE We were going to sing back-up for Pink.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: No kidding.

TRANAE [INAUDIBLE] the one that Pink. We were going to sing back-up for Pink. [INAUDIBLE] real good.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: I have never met Pink, but I've talked with her on the phone several times, and she dropped this off for us, and we've played it, played it, played it, played it, played it.

TRANAE We were going to sing back-up-- hey, Pink. Vicious. Girl, she loves pink, honey. Let's see pink.

CHARDON:

[LAUGHTER]

JIMMY CARPER: OK.

TRANAE I love Pink too. Now, wait, wait, wait, I love pink. I think pink is a beautiful color. Fuchsia is my favorite.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: I see.

TRANAE : Fuchsia pink is my favorite color. Hello, everybody out there. How y'all doing?

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: Tranae, what has been going on?

TRANAE I don't know. Suicide, I guess. [LAUGHS] We've been working just so hard.

CHARDON:

BRENDA Tranae wrote another song.

LACHANCE:

JIMMY CARPER: Aha!

BRENDA Yeah, she's always writing.

LACHANCE:

TRANAE Oh, yeah. Which one?

CHARDON:

BRENDA [INAUDIBLE] with them.

LACHANCE:

TRANAE Oh, yeah, let me tell you. Yeah, OK, this is what happened. I was thinking of another song. Well, I was in a good--

CHARDON: And I was singing to them and they looking at me like I was crazy, because it was only one line.

[LAUGHTER]

BRENDA That's not the song I'm talking about.

LACHANCE:

TRANAE Which one?

CHARDON:

BRENDA It's a ballad. It's pretty good. Pretty good.

LACHANCE:

TRANAE Oh, "There's Got To Be A Better Way To Fall In Love".

CHARDON:

BRENDA Yes, it's a very pretty--

LACHANCE:

TRANAE OK, yeah, I did. But I wrote that was about a month ago. Well kind of, sort of. I did a lyrical week.

CHARDON:

[LAUGHTER]

Because I was really writing about stuff that I was going through. And, usually, I have to be in a-- you know how some artists they have to paint in a certain mood, and for me it has to be--

JIMMY CARPER: You have to be inspired.

TRANAE Well, yeah, but also past experiences like if I get into an argument with somebody or something, and they say
CHARDON: something that maybe somebody said like a few years ago, something in my past, I'll say, oh, and I'll be right that edge. Or it could be like anything I go through my everyday life. If I see something-- I get inspired at the weirdest places. Probably like the restroom, the bus.

[LAUGHTER]

Oh, I have, girl. I would sit on the toilet, honey, and I swear I would come up with something quick, and I'll flush, and get up, and go write.

BRENDA Doing meals. I bet you have a chicken wing in your mouth or something.
LACHANCE:

TRANAE Oh, I was eating. When I eat, I come up with some weird stuff while am eating, especially if the food is good.
CHARDON:

[LAUGHTER]

Really. If the food is good, because I hate greasy food, because my gastritis can't take it. But you have some of the weirdest places that-- and then it also comes from your emotions, and your faith of what you believe in, because I think that when you have a strong belief in religion, which is a firm belief in a powerful being, you sometimes tend to-- we take that for granted sometimes. And I've had so many different experiences in my life that have made me just see the light. I'm calmer. I'm calmer now than I've ever been.

JIMMY CARPER: You do appear to be.

TRANAE Yeah, I'm not like I used to be.
CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: No, no no. You've also been-- one thing I know about you is you're all or nothing. Very little middle of the road. Do you know what I mean? You're either all for it or not.

TRANAE Because it's in my nature to be committed. If I do something, it's my nature to go all the way. No half step. I'm
CHARDON: not built like that. I'm not equipped to even--

JIMMY CARPER: And you're very strong on a lot of things, dreams, we talked about before, the gay community, female impersonators, past and present.

TRANAE Yeah, well, because I have made a couple of vows. I owe several people my life. Even glad you brought that up.
CHARDON: That was something I said I was going to think about tonight. But before Naomi died, I got a chance to talk with her a week before she died. We had a long talk, and she made me promise that I would continue to strive at what I was doing, but she also made sure that she told me to make sure that I make people respect female impersonators no matter what I did.

JIMMY CARPER: You bet.

TRANAE She said, for me-- in so many words that, really, I'm the last of my generation.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: I think so.

TRANAE Of the queens that I've hung with, all of them have died, all gone. The ones that I came through, they either

CHARDON: gone, or they stopped doing drag. So I'm really like the last one. Because when I came out it was Naomi, it was Chocolate, it was Donna, it was Tasha, it was Ramona Simms, it was--

JIMMY CARPER: Was Tiffany Jones still around?

TRANAE When I first came out, Tiffany was still here and she passed.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: She was one of the first.

TRANAE Randy West. All of them are gone. These are people that I saw on a regular basis. And Tommy Robinson is still
CHARDON: with us. You got Amazing Grace. And everybody is gone following their dream. But I'm really the only one left in Houston, actually. And it's important to me to fulfill this legacy that Newman wanted, well, not only Newman, Miss Tee, to follow a legacy. Because I learned at a later part of my life that we really don't get the respect we deserve, and it's a damn shame. It's not a pity, it's a damn shame. As much as we have given just before me.

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah, unbelievable.

TRANAE As much as we have done for the community, people look at us like--

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: Second class citizens.

TRANAE Yeah, they treat us like dog shit. They really do. Did they bleep that? Can they bleep that?

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah, we'll bleep that out later.

TRANAE OK, [BLEEP]. But--

CHARDON:

[LAUGHTER]

--I loose it sometimes.

JIMMY CARPER: I see. Yes.

TRANAE But I'm only human. More or less, now I'm dealing with the pressures now of being an entertainer in Dallas. It's

CHARDON: starting to hit me really-- it's starting to hit close to home. I've had a few experiences, now, that are really, really turning me sour. I'm getting cold now, because that's the daughter.

JIMMY CARPER: It looks like we have a third party here.

TRANAE Let me get a chair. Where's the chair? Let me get you a chair.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: We've got one comment.

TRANAE This is LaDonna. Hi. Say hi to everybody.

CHARDON:

LADONNA: Hi.

JIMMY CARPER: This is the woman with the new grandchild.

TRANAE Yeah, she's a grandmother, honey.

CHARDON:

BRENDA He is gorgeous. He is gorgeous.

LACHANCE:

TRANAE Yes.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: All of Houston has heard about this.

TRANAE Oh, yeah, we told everybody.

CHARDON:

LADONNA: Oh, thanks.

TRANAE Yes, honey. She wasn't ready to be a grandmother this early but it's OK. She's loving it, honey. Oh, babies are so
CHARDON: cute. But I told her. I said when they grow they're little devils. They're hellcats when they get older. You know how they just sit there like a bomb waiting to go off. Oh, but, anyway, it was just-- I've had so many different experiences. And now I'm getting to where--

JIMMY CARPER: What's happening now? What's happening in the scene now?

TRANAE Well, I don't know. I had a long talk. I was at Boy Bar, two weeks ago, and I had to do this. This was just
CHARDON: important to me. I just had to. And I realized that, first of all, we have an age group between 18 to 25 that is going out to the clubs, and they're having a great time, their dancing. And they really are not aware of the background of Gay Pride.

They don't know why we have a Gay parade, they don't know why we have-- seriously, this is a question-- this is somebody that I asked. I do that, occasionally, because I want to know what people think when they come to a stray club or what is the purpose of-- and I was thinking one night, and this guy told me he didn't even know why I was up there.

He didn't really know what was going on. He said he thought he'd just actually went to the club to dance. He didn't know that we had shows like that. He said, well, where did this stuff start? And it was amazing. He didn't even know. And it just led me to believe that a lot of these people really don't know what's going on. And mainly because it's been pushed under the rug a little bit to me.

JIMMY CARPER: It does seem that way, especially in Houston.

TRANAE Right. I feel like people are just pushing things under the rug. I don't think people look at the World the way it's
CHARDON: really the big picture, the real picture. We have a tendency to make an illusion. We trying to build the world the way we want it to be, and that's not the way it is. The real world is that everybody is different colors, everybody are different religions, and we all are diversified. We all don't like the same thing.

JIMMY CARPER: Someone once said, we're not a melting pot, we're more like a salad.

TRANAE Yeah, it's a little bit of everything. And I think these girls need to get a spoon and get a taste. They need to taste
CHARDON: up this little salad. This is the chef salad. This is not just a season salad.

[LAUGHTER]

There are bits of meat, pasta, and all kind of stuff in there, beef. But these things are affecting me, and it's causing me to be more, now, outspoken more than ever now, because the group is important to me, Diverse House is definitely important, but my respect as an entertainer is much more important.

My respect and my dignity is more important, because this is my life. This is what I've committed my life to doing. So if I'm going to do this, I'm going to do it right. I don't want to leave no stone unturned. I actually want everybody to know my purpose on this Earth, and let them know why I'm here, and let them know the message, what am I coming to them with. And the reason being is because I have a message. I have something to say. I have a solution. No, it's another word for solution.

JIMMY CARPER: Why don't you say theory?

TRANAE I have a theory, or I have an alternative. I have maybe an assumption of a solution, of a way we could deal with
CHARDON: each other on a one to one basis. I have something for our younger generation, 18 to 25. Don't take no for an answer, hang in there if you got a dream.

See, we live in a society where the people that didn't make light of their dreams tend to hold other people down. But I don't like that. I don't think that a person that didn't succeed in whatever they did have the right to tell another person, oh, you ain't going to make it either. That's not the way. You're supposed to push the person. You should want to see them make it, whatever they're going to be. Doctor, lawyer, pediatrician, podiatrist, foot, anything, a city cleaner. Because we all lay back and dream.

I committed to making my dreams become a reality, no matter who stands in the way. I'm going to step over them. This is important to me. My message to the people is very important. Gay, straight, Bi, Black, White, whatever. I have something to say to everybody. I want everybody to listen to what I have to say, because it's important.

If we continue the way we're going, we're going to lose respect for each other. And then we're going to lose our self respect. We're not going to have a reason to exist anymore if we can't see-- the music has brought us together. The music brought us together.

OK, my love for people and life has brought me here. And that's important to me. Sometimes when people start something, and they're not able to finish it, it's always somewhere down the line, for some ungodly reason, God puts other people in place for them to carry on the legacy. I know this. And that's what I think he has done. I've had so many people before me try to make a difference. Remember we talked about that. I said I'm probably one of the only entertainers that actually comes on this radio.

JIMMY CARPER: That's right. Absolutely.

TRANAE And if I'm the first, then good. I hope plenty more would follow behind me, because it is important to be a part-- if
CHARDON: you are not part of the solution--

BRENDA You're part of the problem.
LACHANCE:

TRANAE Yeah, you really are. And I don't understand how we have so many great entertainers, and they don't even try to
CHARDON: show the public that this is not a novelty. My music is very important to me, the people I work with are important to me, this community is important to me.

I love the streets. This is my community. For 15 years, it's been a part of my life, and I'm not going to just let it waste away without at least trying to do something for it. It's like if you let a trashcan fall down and all the trash blows over by the yard, the longer you let it blow, it's always going to be a whole bunch of trash, but if you pick up one can, that's a start.

JIMMY CARPER: That's right. So where are you picking up that can, girl?

TRANAE Girl, I've been picking up plenty cans.
CHARDON:

[LAUGHTER]

Right now the can is that we are going to be in y'all's face. We are live. I am making sure the Diverse House is in everybody's face for the next three months.

JIMMY CARPER: Good.

TRANAE They're going to hear nothing but the Diverse House, some drag queen, I don't know.
CHARDON:

[LAUGHTER]

But I am not going to-- y'all are going to trust me. Y'all are going to be very pleased with what we have to offer you all.

JIMMY CARPER: Well, we are looking forward to it.

TRANAE It's a lot of hard work and impatience, but it's going to pay off because that's the way it's meant to be, that with
CHARDON: hard work comes great, great rewards. But all things come in time. They do not happen overnight. And I'm patient, honey, because I'm working hard, honey.

JIMMY CARPER: We've known each other a long time through a couple of groups and--

TRANAE Yeah, and people are changing, we're all changing. And I look at myself in the mirror, and I've changed a lot.
CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: Yes, you have.

TRANAE I've matured. I've grown up a lot, and I'm learning a lot. And respect is the thing that I'm really starting to deal
CHARDON: with now is because it's important. Women in America are-- this is the reason why I really have the group the way it is. A lot of people would ask me how come you don't have-- matter of fact, I was telling Brenda about expanding, doing some more. I want to do more. I wanted to sign some artists. I met a young man with a little group called 50/50.

JIMMY CARPER: Gregg.

TRANAE Yes. And this little boy has talent.
CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: Yes, they've done a song and it sounds very much like Human League--

TRANAE Human League. Yeah.
CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: --crossed with Morrissey.

TRANAE Yeah, so we talked, and I told him that he needed some guidance. And I told him--
CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: He certainly does.

TRANAE Yeah. And I told Brenda. I said, girl, I just felt like-- I'm one of those kind of people, I like to try anything. I like to
CHARDON: stick my feet get my feet wet. And I thought, ooh, I wonder if I could be a good manager or a producer for them and push them out. And then Brenda said, well, that's taking too many things too fast now. But just think you got all these young talent around here. Somebody has got to snatch it up and give them a chance, show them that--

JIMMY CARPER: OK, I understand that. But I also know that there's a lot of talent sitting right here in front of me.

TRANAE Oh, yeah, but we know our calling. We know where we're going. It's a proven fact that God he talks to us, and we
CHARDON: know where we're going.

JIMMY CARPER: I have a feeling Brenda doesn't have the patience you do.

BRENDA No.
LACHANCE:

TRANAE Brenda is not going to have the-- it's really not patience, it's drive.
CHARDON:

BRENDA Sometimes no.
LACHANCE:

TRANAE It's drive.

CHARDON:

BRENDA No, I got the drive.

LACHANCE:

TRANAE You got the drive?

CHARDON:

BRENDA The patience, though. It's patience.

LACHANCE:

TRANAE She reminds me of a pregnant woman.

CHARDON:

BRENDA I'm ready to do it and--

LACHANCE:

TRANAE They didn't want to hurry-- had that baby.

CHARDON:

BRENDA Hold up a minute.

LACHANCE:

TRANAE They just want to hurry up and have it. They don't want to wait for that long.

CHARDON:

[LAUGHTER]

BRENDA OK. But, yeah, I just want to accomplish what we're trying to do and get up there and get it over with, and then
LACHANCE: move on to the next phase. We have so many songs. Everybody here, Madonna she writes, and, of course, Tranae and myself. And we have so many songs to do. it's like, well, let's get these out. What is it so far?

TRANAE 14.

CHARDON:

BRENDA 14 that we have to get out. And then--

LACHANCE:

HOST: And I have one? You greedy things, you.

[LAUGHTER]

BRENDA I asked Tranae was she going to bring anything for you guys listen to, and she said no. And I'm like--

LACHANCE:

TRANAE Well, because--

CHARDON:

BRENDA I don't have--

LACHANCE:

TRANAE Hey, let me tell you. See, what happens is too, I have been exposed to-- what I do is, this is the truth and

CHARDON: LaDonna can testify this, I go out more and do a lot more, what do you call it?

LADONNA: PR and [INAUDIBLE]

TRANAE Well, yeah. And what I do is I go to seminars, and I hang out with record people, and I have learned that there's

CHARDON: a technique, a proven technique, that works. And one of them is that if you're a new group, or if you're a new artist, don't push yourself on people too quick.

What you do is you start off slow. Hey, this is what has happened to our group. It's really backwards the way this group is set up, because usually a group starts out together and people break off and become successes. They go like that. Like the lead singer would go and become big. Well, I started off already got it together and then picked up two people.

And a lot of people said, well, that's backwards, because they're going to be looking at you a lot and not looking at them. It does happen like that. But I found it riveting. What I do is, I push myself as a female impersonator, got the exposure that I needed. But the public wouldn't take me serious if-- when you are a female impersonator, I already knew how far I could go with that, and that would be as far as drag is popular.

And I thought, OK, they're not going to take me serious if I say I want to release a record one day. They're not, because they're going to think, oh, God, he can't sing, or what did they do? We've never seen a female impersonator that can sing. But, of course, RuPaul did it. Well, what makes it even better is having a female impersonator put a group together and show songwriting ability, production ability, and the ability to put together a big production with a company.

JIMMY CARPER: There you go.

TRANAE That made a difference to me. So instead of just putting a group together, I became like the Berry Gordy of

CHARDON: Montrose. I want the record company. I want to be in complete control. I want to be able to say I'm not only going to write, but I'm going to show you all that I can produce, that I have the musical talent, and the ability to put this together, and it's going to work, and it's going to make money. Not only just money, but I will get my point across, and make a lot of people stop and look, and say he wasn't playing. He was not playing. He said he's going do it and he did it.

That's the problem we're having now, convincing people that I have a lot to offer. That's one of the biggest things that I've learned just from being me, is, for some reason, I have a lot of people that are intimidated by me, they fear me. And it's not that they fear me physical fear, it's goal-oriented fear. I've noticed that when I'm around people they don't set high goals for themselves, they tend to get scared of me. It is. I'm serious. I know you--

JIMMY CARPER: I know what you're talking about. No, I know exactly what you're talking about.

TRANAE
CHARDON:

I've worked in several clubs. And I'm not like a lot of other entertainers. I will stand my ground when it comes to my respect. I feel like if I go into a club, and I feel like I know what I can do, and I can stand my all-- my grandmother always said, when I first started singing, she said, if you think you're worth \$1,000,000, say a million. Don't go any lower. If you feel in your heart what your worth.

So if I feel like I've contributed, I've worked hard on my art or my craft, when I step into a club and ask a bar owner that I'd like to perform and I want to be paid a certain amount, I want that amount, no less, no more. I don't want him to try to negotiate me down, because then that makes me think that he don't believe in me, that he don't think that I'm capable of carrying my all.

And a lot of people are scared of self-confidence, and too much of it scares people away. And I have seen the result of it. It's just people are afraid of me. To be very honest, a lot of people are afraid to book me in their clubs, because of two things, they think I'm too expensive, they think that I because I sing live, we would have animosity between entertainers.

If you're good at something, a lot of entertainers think you're coming in to steal their glory. They think that I'm coming in to try to take the spotlight from them. And what they don't seem to realize, my direction, where I'm going with my career, is nowhere near where a female impersonator is going.

Most female impersonators have a life expectancy of at least-- there are some that are still in their early-- I mean, late 30s and 40s still doing small bars. And that's for them, if that's what they want to do. But my direction is to be out of the drag business.

The drag was a venue. My direction, from the start of me opening my mouth, was to sing and make records. The drag came later. That was just something to approach my sexuality, that was for me to find myself, and that was also a venue to get some attention. Because I could have been a male singer. I could have put a suit on and song, but I knew that people wouldn't look at me, because it was too many guys out there that could sing.

So I said I got to do something that's different. If I do something that's different, I will stand out like a sore thumb. Now I stand out like a sore thumb. When I step on the stage now, they don't say, he's a drag queen, or he does Whitney Houston, or he does this. They say that's the one. This thing sings. She use her own voice [INAUDIBLE] play. And that's how I'm known all around the country now, and I feel good about that. I've earned that.

Now, when I get on the phone and call, or I step on the stage, I'm not compared to nobody, because there ain't nobody like me. There's no other queen that sings like I do, and they don't put as much effort into what they do like I have. I eat music, I sleep music, I dream about beads and designer clothes. Music is my life.

JIMMY CARPER: So when are we going to hear more Diverse House?

[LAUGHTER]

TRANAE
CHARDON:

Well, I don't know. Well, let's see.

JIMMY CARPER: What's the group doing?

TRANAE Well, we really are concentrating on sound. We're really working on our-- because this going to be a big year for
CHARDON: us. I have great expectations and plans for this group. And this is going to be a great, big year. And we're not prepared for it, because was five years after Alto broke up. After Alto broke up--

BRENDA Hasn't been that long.
LACHANCE:

TRANAE Yes, it has. Well, two years I'll just make you look good. Two years. The illusion of five. Two.
CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: It's been quite a while.

TRANAE We were together in '89. We were together '89, '99, and we stopped singing at '91. Well, three years. OK. well,
CHARDON: we took a break, and what it did was it really helped. It gave me a chance to write more and really, really, really look inside myself. It gave Brenda a chance to really decide on what she really, really wanted out of the music industry.

And then we found somebody that was really, really talented, LaDonna, that really decided this is great for her to be with us, because she's making a statement by being in the group. She's a single mother. And that was important to me, because once I found out, I wanted to show other women out there that you could be a single parent too.

But, look, if this girl could grab her dreams, don't tell me out there, I don't want to hear no single parents say they can't be who they want to be, because she's doing it, and I'm glad. That's what I like about her, is the part that she's a strong woman. She didn't let anything get in her way, and I like that. I think that that's a statement in itself. But, see, that's what I like about the group. We all have something that we can--

LADONNA: I started out as a single mother. Now, I'm a single grandmother.

[LAUGHTER]

We better start doing something.

[LAUGHTER]

TRANAE That's what makes us Diverse House. We have so much diversity. It's so much. This is like a melting pot. No,
CHARDON: ma'am, this is, what do they call them? A fajita pina.

[LAUGHTER]

This is better than a chef's salad, baby. This is like a kitchen sink [INAUDIBLE]

JIMMY CARPER: The only problem they have is trying to get a word in.

TRANAE Well, see, I do all the talking. They are so soft spoken.
CHARDON:

[LAUGHTER]

LADONNA: Yeah, right.

[LAUGHTER]

Everyone knows Tranaes like to talk.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, yeah.

TRANAE I do.

CHARDON:

LADONNA: But she does it well. Please, carry on.

TRANAE OK, thank you. I appreciate you.

CHARDON:

LADONNA: You know.

TRANAE Let's see, for Diverse House, well, believe it or not, our goal is to have our first project.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: I have to interrupt you and let everyone know that they are listening to KPFT Houston. This is Jimmy Carper from After Hours, and you're listening to Diverse House, Tranae, LaDonna and Brenda.

TRANAE Oh, look at the legs, ain't they just pretty. Tranae, LaDonna, Brenda.

CHARDON:

[LAUGHTER]

Oh, where were we? OK, so let's see. We got 14 solid projects. OK? So far--

JIMMY CARPER: And I'm itching.

TRANAE --we're working on four.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: I'm itching. I want to play them.

TRANAE To be very honest, this is going to be one of those projects where you're going to hear a diversity of material.

CHARDON: We're not going to do like the conventional stuff like everybody does and release a hot, fast single, and then you go right by having a fast single. Every release we're going to do is going to be totally different. The music is so diversified.

JIMMY CARPER: It's like this Pink album, everything is different on it.

TRANAE Our first single is going to be a remake, "Love To Love You, Baby". And that's going to be--

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, I can't wait for that one.

TRANAE That's going to be real housey. And then our second cut is "Who Knows What Would Happen", and that's kind of
CHARDON: techno-ish, pop. And then we've got "Give Me Time", that Brenda wrote. It's real hip hop and very urban. It's going to be great for Black radio, definitely. We got "Love Is The Key", which is real message music. For me, I like that message music. Give you something like "Three Degrees", or stuff like that. That kind of music about people. What? Guess I called it "Three Degrees" Jones girls, Pointer Sisters thing, I guess.

LADONNA: It's not like that at all.

TRANAE You don't think so? OK, excuse me for being a gay.

CHARDON:

[LAUGHTER]

Well, maybe when I was writing it, I thought-- because that was my dream to write-- I always dreamed about writing stuff for somebody like that anyway.

BRENDA There's definitely a message in it.

LACHANCE:

TRANAE Yeah, of course, we got Gay Pride coming up. The goal I'm setting for, actually, is to release "Love To Love You"
CHARDON: the day of Gay Pride.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, great.

TRANAE We're going to sing it the night of the rally. And we just got to do as much PR, probably, as possible and just stay
CHARDON: in everybody's face, just get everything recorded and out, and then follow it with a tour. Because it's a big world out there, honey. We got to taste some of that world.

JIMMY CARPER: And you're just the group to do it.

TRANAE We're going to change things in the music industry, drastically. [LAUGHS]

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: Well, keep us informed, because we want to know what's happening with your group, and we want to be able to play stuff as soon as we can get it.

TRANAE I pray to God.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: And we'll be pushing it. I want to thank you for coming.

TRANAE Oh, thank you. We love you out there. Y'all listen out for us. We've got great things to say.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: And we're playing your promo.

TRANAE Thank you. Do you like it, by the way, y'all?

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah.

TRANAE Yes, we need feedback. We really do. We need to hear from you. And let us know what you all think we could do,
CHARDON: musically wise. What kind of sound that you're looking for? Something different. That's important to us, because the music industry changes and it changes every day. And it's important to know.

JIMMY CARPER: In fact, I opened this show with this tonight, and I'll play it again.

TRANAE So it's important to us that we hear that from you.

CHARDON:

JIMMY CARPER: OK, thanks for coming.

TRANAE Love you. Peace.

CHARDON:

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[MUSIC - SYLVESTER, "TAKE ME TO HEAVEN"]

(SINGING) [INAUDIBLE] want me.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, yeah, Sylvester with "Take Me To Heaven". And now we're going to go to week three of AIDS caregiving lessons for the second decade. And this week's prescription for burnout and compassion fatigue. And we'll see you right around 3 o'clock to end the show.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

(SINGING) Woo, baby.

MAN 1: Human beings are capable of the most extraordinary acts of commitment and courage under certain circumstances. A war, a natural disaster, a train wreck. Any time the going gets tough, some people get going. This is certainly true when we take a close look at AIDS caregiving.

What was so clear to me as we interviewed the experienced caregivers for this program, is not one of them considered himself or herself a tough person before they made the commitment to AIDS caregiving, at least not tough in terms of knowing how to handle catastrophic, emotionally-charged situations. I've said it before, and I'll say it again, AIDS caregiving is a kind of crucible, a place where intense heat is applied to everyday elements that may in turn be transformed into something much stronger, more resilient and more valuable in the process.

As the number of people with AIDS grows, as the condition of the person you're caring for gets worse, as the AIDS organization you're a member of gets strained to the breaking point, you also feel the heat. In this segment of the program, we'll consider some of the really hard parts of this work.

RAMON
MATOS: Your mind just goes crazy with, well, if only I'd done this, if only I'd done that, if we'd rearranged this, if we had seen this coming, if we had made these plans, none of this would have happened. And I realized that I could do that until I drove myself bonkers, and I still would not have any answers. Those questions would never be answered in my lifetime, and to persist in asking them was merely self-flagellation of the highest order.

MICHAELA

SOLOT:

Usually, what happens when I walk into a room I pray. It's like, help me do the right thing. And I have to just step out of the way. And there's something scary about that. There's a lot of surrender, and sometimes things I do don't work, or they don't seem to work, or people are still upset, and then I have to sit with my own inadequacy. And it's so hard to feel inadequate. But that's life sometimes. There's really nothing you can do. What the other counselors say is that we just show up most of the time. It's like, what is your job about? We show up, we pay attention, and we care.

MAN 2:

There was a day I remember very well where I had a house meeting at 9 o'clock in the morning, where I had a resident screaming at me at the top of my lungs about how I was an emotional desert, I was never available to him, he never felt that I ever understood it. He was saying why couldn't I give him a break. And this was all out of the fact that he'd wanted to move into a bedroom without following the procedures, and I was the one to tell him no, you can't do that.

I went from that to a hospital visit at RK Davies, where a client, who'd had a wonderful conversation two days before I show up to his hospital room, and he doesn't know who I am. And I'm sitting there trying to make some sort of conversation with this person, really, just not knowing what to do.

MICHAELA

SOLOT:

Understanding that is something else that I had to see, because I had a lot of statements. Well, I don't take anything, but I smoke crack all day, and I haven't been in the hospital yet. But the end result is that they do end up in the hospital with pneumonia, or pneumocystis, or whatever. But they don't see that.

If they've been diagnosed for three years, and they've been using for three years, and haven't been hospitalized yet. And T-cell counts are still high. And the doctor, oh, well, you're doing well, your T-cell count, you must be really taking care of yourself. It's a joke. They go out and they say, yeah, right. That okays what they're doing, and it makes it logical to them that it's preserving them.

BORAT

LINDEMUD:

I remember when I first started working on the AIDS Ward, and I sat and report day after day. We would listen to patient X in the room number one has herpes simplex virus, CMV retinitis, pneumocystis carinii pneumonia number three, et cetera, no support, homeless, et cetera. Room two, more of the same, about 40 patients in a row.

I would be exhausted by the end of the report. I hadn't even left the charting room yet. And I felt like I was, all of a sudden, looking at this massive tidal wave called AIDS, and it was just moving in, and there was not very much at all I could do about it, but put one foot in front of the other. And that's all I've ever felt like I could do is just keep putting one foot in front of the other.

GILBERT

MEDIINA:

I've had AIDS now for seven years, and I get frightened, because I don't know how much longer I'm going to have AIDS. And I find myself being very, very much alone today, because a lot of the people who I had-- the circle of people who I did have as friends at one time, they're no longer here, they've evaporated. I've had circles of friends that have evaporated. So what's happened in turn now is the group of acquaintances that I've had are evaporating, and I'm feeling more and more and more isolated.

And I find that the longer I'm living, that the fewer people are available for me to talk to. That it becomes much more narrow, the people who are available to me. And I find that very, very sad, and I feel very, very alone a lot of the times. And I even hate to use the cliché, it's like it's lonely at the top, because the longer you're around, you do end up thinking-- I used to hear people say, well, are you afraid you're going to be the last one to shut the lights out? I think, am I? It really frightens me. It really frightens me.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

MAN 1:

One of the people you just heard was Ramon Matos, who's a counselor and coordinator at a residence for people with AIDS. His last words were really just not knowing what to do. Borat Lindemud used the words tidal wave to describe his feeling of being overwhelmed in a hospital AIDS Ward.

Michaela Solot said it's so hard to feel inadequate. But that's life sometimes, there's really nothing you can do. She described her frustration in working with people who think that street drugs are keeping them alive. Gilbert Medina captures so well the pain of losing friend after friend and the painful irony of being a long term survivor of AIDS.

If you're an AIDS caregiver who's feeling any of the same things you're not alone. Many of the people we interviewed are among the most experienced AIDS caregivers you'll find anywhere. Only one person in that collection of voices has had any long term professional training that directly relates to AIDS caregiving, only one, yet, they're all effective caregivers.

By professional training, I mean, specifically in the psychological or psychiatric aspects of AIDS as a psychologist, family or child counselor, psychiatrist, psychiatric social worker, psychiatric nurse, or pastoral counselor. I think the test of effective one on one caregiving is the quality of your relationship with the person with AIDS, the quality of the relationship as viewed by the person you serve, not how many people you can handle, or how many crisis you can cope with, or how centered you are in the midst of the tidal wave.

The most effective caregivers do get rocked off center, do get depressed, do cry, walk out, and say, I can't take it anymore. Remember, you're a human being too, not superhuman. You're good at recognizing and responding to the human needs of the person you're giving care to. Recognize and respond to your own needs and your own humanity as well. That's what compassion, which is the basis of all good caregiving, is about. Namely, being present with love for ourselves and for the people we care for.

But the question you want an answer to is what can I do to hang in there when the going gets tough? It may seem tired, old, and clichéd, but we heard it over and over again, you learn by doing. You learn on the job. And please understand that I use that phrase respectfully.

Taking care of your own son, who's got AIDS, is not merely a job. Nina Menger told us she'd never had any training as a skilled nurse or counselor, but when her son, Michael, was living with AIDS, she became his full-time caregiver, and knows she did a good job.