

SPEAKER 1: This kind of leads towards what I want to bring up next. And there's-- I think, around paganism, there's been this deep sense of secretism. Part of that came from the burning times, when pagans were burned at the stake, witches. And basically where I'm kind of going with this sense of-- as GLBT pagans, we kind of have two closets.

We have the GLBT closet that we have to deal with mundania, the outside world. But we also have the broom closet. And that can also be within the queer community. And there are so many misperceptions. And that's why I wanted to do this show tonight as part of an education.

That we aren't sacrificing babies. We aren't doing evil works. In fact, most pagan beliefs that I've seen, true paganism, it's really about healing, and healing the Earth, and making the world a better place. But I want to kind of go around and talk about not only coming out of the GLBT closet, but also coming out of the broom closet. And how has that experience been for each of you? That's a big one.

KIT: I'm Kit. And I came out of the broom closet and the GLB closet about the same time, within a year of each other. And both of them are really terrifying at first. But at the same time, it's been a really freeing experience.

I grew up Catholic. And the first paganism that I read about was voodoo. And I don't practice voodoo. I don't kill chickens. I don't-- I don't put binding spells or powders on people.

SPEAKER 2: You hate some on your pizza earlier, I think.

KIT: Something like that. But I didn't kill it. [? Hence there-- ?]

SPEAKER 3: It was dead when it got there.

KIT: Yes, it was. Thank you. And it's-- for me, it's been over 17 years. And it's like-- I have a problem going back into those closets now. When I have to visit my family, or-- I don't go back in my closet when I visit my family anymore, but I used to.

And I really-- I have a problem with people that come up to me of any faith, it doesn't matter if it's Christian, or Buddhist, or whatever, and proselytize to me. Because my belief system doesn't include proselytization. And I had a woman stalking me on the bus for a couple of weeks trying to tell me that Jesus wants me to run into you. And I'm not banging-- I'm not bashing Christians or anything. And finally, I had to ask her to please leave me alone, or I was going to find her house and do something nasty in her bed.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 2: You can't say that word on the radio.

KIT: Yeah, I can't say that word on the radio. But she-- but this woman was on the bus every time I got on for a while there. And I'm sure it was just a coincidence. And I wouldn't dare do the same thing to anybody that she did to me. And I wouldn't come out calling them something like a devil worshipper when-- because she called me a satanist. It was just-- she leaves me alone now. But that's the beauty of paganism. We don't proselytize. We let people make up their own minds about things.

SPEAKER 1: Actually, I had an interesting experience not too long ago. I had a woman come to my door the other night to talk to me about Jesus. And it really kind of turned around. And I said, well, I have my own faith system. And I was being a little cautious. And she said, well, what is that? And I said, it's paganism.

And she goes, what's paganism? And I said, well, it's about celebrating the Earth and respecting the Earth. And it's an Earth based religion. It's matriarchal. There's a Goddess and a God. And there's a balance. And before long, she was-- she got so curious. And she said, it really sounds like a lot of what I really thought Christianity should be.

SPEAKER 3: Whoa.

SPEAKER 1: I mean, it really moved me in a way. And she says, where can I learn more about this paganism? And I said, well, I'll tell you what. We have a group that meets here in Houston, feel free to come if you want to. And she said, wow, we'd like to learn more about this. So she was really impressed.

SPEAKER 3: It's refreshing to see someone with an open mind.

SPEAKER 4: Gigi, forgive me if I kind of spring in here, Dee here again. There's one point I'd like to make clear. The Lady and the Lord do not make mistakes. All of us belong under their protection. It doesn't matter what your sexual preference is or your religious preference. We are all one. And we are perfect in their eyes. As I said, they do not make mistakes.

SPEAKER 1: And, we've got a waving hand. Someone walked in. Anyway, I think you're right in that, in the sense that, whatever path, even the Christian path, and I don't want to play down on Christians, but whatever path works for you on a spiritual level is good to follow. But I don't think it's something that she should cram down somebody else's throat. And I think that's one of the things I love about the pagan community is it is very diverse and very accepting and very open to different--

SPEAKER 2: I was just-- are you finished?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

I was just going to say, yeah that's one of the things, that you were talking to the lady. That what you were telling her was, for you, was the truth. And what she heard was the truth that she was seeking in Christianity. And it goes back to what I was saying. It's the truth wherever you find it.

And going back again to the idea of Bruce Lee's philosophy. You take what works for you. Now, what works for me may not work for you or anybody else in this room. So it's like sitting down to dinner. You may have your favorite food. It could be chocolate covered asparagus or something like that, and you love it. And it works for you.

But if you order it for everybody at the table, they're going to go, ew. Why did you give-- why are you putting this stuff in front of me. I don't want this. I can't take this. I can't eat this. And it goes with the same thing with religion and philosophy. Everybody is in a different place in the world. Everybody has got a different background, a different future.

And you can find a lot of general philosophy that works for a lot of people. And those are-- as they gained popularity and things, then you have your major religions and things like that. And those will work for certain people. But even within those religions, people will have a little bit different path to go on to.

Whereas, Christianity works for people. And it's like-- a couple of my roommates are Christians. I've got a Buddhist roommate. And I've got friends from all different know paths of religion and paths of life. And yeah, that's one of the things is finding the truth that works for you. And that's really important.

SPEAKER 1: Well, I want to get back to this broom closet concept.

SPEAKER 2: Yeah, well as far as for me, the broom closet, I was never in the broom closet.

SPEAKER 1: I never was either.

SPEAKER 2: When I grew up, we didn't really grow-- I didn't grow up in a Christian household. They went to church a few times. And I was like, well, I'm not really into this too much. I was like, well, I don't feel like going to church, because I'm not getting anything out of it. So I still went on, not to say I was devoid of spirituality.

I've got the things that I feel are true. And I follow those. But as far as that goes, as far as the GLBT closet, I was in that with the door nailed shut for a long time. Until I finally came out. And then you get a little foot out, and then a little bit more, and a little bit more. And they went over coming out of the GLBT closet for a long time on many shows on here. So I'm not going to be saying anything new on that.

But as far as the religion and spirituality aspect, I haven't really been in a situation where I really got to hide what my beliefs are from people. I don't run around just screaming at the top of my lungs for the same reason. What I believe and what works for me may not work for anybody else. So if somebody asked me and wants me to tell them all about it, and everything like that, I can.

But as Kit was saying, proselytizing, I just see it as a wasted effort. That's about all I've got on that subject. Merlin, you look like you have something to say.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

MERLIN: I think for most of my-- most of my friends-- I was not born in Houston. I grew up in New York. Everybody I-- just everybody I know and everybody I'm related to knows I'm gay. And that was a long and hard enough road as it was to get to this point in my life.

My family doesn't know about the pagan side. And I'm not going to get into it with them on that subject, because that would just be oil and water. And it would just-- for me, everybody here, everybody who I meet, everybody who I know, I wear this necklace. And they see that I have a pentacle on here. I have two of them.

One of them is not only a pentacle, but it also has, in the center, a rainbow, a circle that is the Pride rainbow. So if they don't get the message that I am both pagan and gay, they're not looking closely enough. But as far as-- I once heard a great thing. And again, as I earlier said, everybody's religion and belief system is their own to follow. But I once heard a great saying that said that religion was for people afraid of going to hell. And that spirituality was for those of us who have been there.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 2: That's one of my favorites.

MERLIN: And we as gay, bi, lesbian, you go through the list, transgendered, questioning, you name it. We've all been through our own personal hells in this life. The idea of believing in a hell that comes afterwards just sort of seems like overkill. Because I had been through stuff.

SPEAKER 1: Station break time.

SPEAKER 5: Yes, it is. We'll be right back.

Well, maybe we won't hear. You're listening to After Hours KPFT Houston and KEOS College Station. I'll bring those carts back at a little later.

SPEAKER 1: Touched on something here. We're back. When I was growing up, I grew up in a-- well, my father was a Christian minister. And I was suicidal as a teenager. And I walked through the woods one day. And I came in touch with some forces. And these, later I learned to identify as pagan.

During that period, I was really forced into the broom closet, big time. It would not have been very proper for the elder son of a minister to come out as pagan. I think, well, my father already had the Bishop come and perform exorcism on me at one point, trying to cure me of whatever he thought was wrong.

And I remember one-- the day I got to move out of home and could be who I was, freely and openly, even though it sometimes meant some hard times was a very liberating experience. It was a time when all of a sudden, I found the joy of being me and being able to express myself, and being able to communicate and share with people from my heart without any secrets. And it's like this weight came off my shoulders. It was amazing.

SPEAKER 5: OK, let me get in here now and see how this works.

JOAN DEVLIN: Hi, this is Joan Devlin. You're listening to KPFT's Lesbian and Gay Voices.

SPEAKER 6: We want to create the political climate for same sex marriages.

SPEAKER 7: Let's just talk about some of this stuff.

SPEAKER 8: The neutron lesbian strikes again.

JOAN DEVLIN: We're going to be doing some radical radio right now.

SPEAKER 9: Legal changes decriminalizing gay sex.

SPEAKER 6: We celebrate the diversity.

JACK VALINSKI: Welcome to another edition of Lesbian and Gay Voices. This is Jack Valinski.

SPEAKER 11: It wasn't until I had lived with a woman for a year that it even occurred to me to ask, do you think we're lesbians?

JOAN DEVLIN: Civil rights for gays. The ending of Don't Ask Don't Tell.

JACK VALINSKI: Listen to Lesbian and Gay Voices.

SPEAKER 12: My prediction Al Gore 276 electoral votes, George W Bush 262.

SPEAKER 13: That's Lesbian and Gay Voices, Mondays at 8:00 PM.

SPEAKER 14: I hear gay people.

SPEAKER 15: And don't forget on the fourth Monday of every month is JD Doyle's Queer Music Heritage, brings you an hour of music from your past and a little from your present. And now, this is about a show that comes on right After Hours.

ROB LOVE: Yo, what's up? It's your man Rob Love, representing DJ Good Grief and the early morning groove show. Check us out every Saturday night from 3:00 AM to 6:00 AM. Now we're going to play all your favorite old school R&B, all your favorite brand new R&B. And we're going to rock it out every night with the Super Grief mixes, baby. You got to check it out every Saturday night, 3:00 AM to 6:00 AM, baby. Rob Love, DJ Good Grief, early morning groove.

SPEAKER 5: Yes, early morning groove, guys. Yeah, they are great.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Everything except dead Europeans.

[INAUDIBLE]

SPEAKER 1: Well, we're back. And we're talking about paganism and about being in the double closet of GLBT and the broom closet in our society.

MERLIN: There was one thing I wanted to-- that struck me as we were-- during the commercial. One of the things that's hardest about coming out of the broom closet is that if we didn't believe this when we were growing up, we all had the religion of our families, the previous-- whatever that is. In my case, Roman Catholic.

And there's a lot of shame, and guilt, and stuff that you have to get through that you're bred to believe something so much. And yet, a part of you says, no, that's not it. And it's hard to balance that out and come to your own belief system and be able to put that behind-- the stuff that you were force fed behind you. I have three uncles who are all Jesuit priests. So you might imagine what it was like. But anyhow, that's just what I--

SPEAKER 1: Well, I bring this up, because I know a lot of things have been happening in Texas lately. We've had some kids taken out of pagan homes because they were pagans. We've had some incidents in the school systems where kids wanted to wear their religious symbols to class. And they were told, no, that's satanic. And you can't do that. And finally, it was worked through.

And then we've had just tonight, I saw that Fort Hood, they've-- some Christian groups have gone in and-- radical Christian groups, they've gone in and desecrated the pagan altar again. It's really hard in this culture, especially when you have the fundamentalists.

And it's not all Christians, because believe me. My partner Jay is Christian. And her sister is fully supportive of me as a pagan. I'm supportive of them as Christians. I respect them. But I'm talking about the type like what's his name that was going around for a while, still is--

SPEAKER 2: Are you talking about Fred Phelps?

SPEAKER 1: Yeah, Fred Phelps type.

SPEAKER 2: Freddy Krueger Phelps.

MERLIN: I wish he'd put a zipper on it.

SPEAKER 1: Those are the scary ones. And those are the ones that mean us harm.

MERLIN: I have friends who are Christian. I have friends who are Christian and who do not try to change who I am. They accept me as I am.

SPEAKER 1: But the thing I'd like to bring up is that what's interesting is that a lot of Christianity borrowed heavily from paganism. The Christmas tree, everything from Christmas tree to Easter to--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SPEAKER 5: I have a book called When Santa was a Shaman.

SPEAKER 1: Even Santa Claus, a lot of the Roman Catholic Church is full of pagan--

SPEAKER 5: Saint Bridget from Ireland.

SPEAKER 4: That's only one instance,

SPEAKER 1: Go ahead.

SPEAKER 4: I'm sorry Gigi. But the Christian religions have borrowed so heavily on paganism. They actually cannot say just where their religion ends or ours end and theirs begins. And you're speaking of the amount of trouble that's going on here in the state of Texas. I'd like to bring up one point.

Two years running in a small town in Massachusetts, there has been a pagan community within a very small village which is mostly dominant Christian. Year before last, on Samhain, they were up, this one interviewer, was up there interviewing the high priest and priestess and the coven members.

SPEAKER 5: That's Halloween, by the way.

SPEAKER 4: Only to find out that the village elders, the township elders we're doing the best to eject this coven from their own town. And we're talking small children, men and women who have done no harm to anyone being ejected from their own homes, from the only homes they ever knew.

It was so funny because the same TV interviewer went back at Yule of last year. And a few of these town elders were actually writing to senators, legislators, and our government trying to ban paganism. And there was even some loose talk about deportation.

SPEAKER 2: Which will never happen, but.

SPEAKER 1: Well, and I don't want to just stay on a negative note here. But a lot of healing is needed. And a lot of education is needed.

SPEAKER 4: Very true.

SPEAKER 1: I want to kind of go around and get a feel for where each of you are in your path as a GLBT pagan. And how does that relate to the larger pagan community that's not GLBT, but pagan and straight, but not narrow?

SPEAKER 4: Thank you, thank you very much.

MERLIN: I-- we have a lot of sayings and things that are part of the Wiccan read, our creeds, our belief systems. And one of the things that I take most to heart is and it harm none. I don't believe in committing an act of violence unless it is in my own defense.

Another thing says less than self defense it be. And I cannot-- I don't believe in hurting another human being. I believe that people-- if people took the time to try and understand that there is room, this is a pretty big world. And that there is room enough for all of us.

And that to discredit anyone's belief system, to talk down to it is to disavow somebody else's-- what somebody else feels, what somebody else truly feels inside of them is their way. And as a gay person, I think that's one of the other things that appeals to me so much about paganism, is that all of the people I have met who are pagan, gay, straight, you name it, we accept each other as we are.

And that's a wonderful thing. I have no I have no arguments with another pagan who is a husband and wife, a straight husband and wife with kids. We all have our own ways of doing things. And we accept each other for our paths, even though the way we follow may be different.

SPEAKER 1: Yeah, I want to mention. I've been to some pagan gatherings here. And it never ceases to amaze me. We get around the fire circle, and drum, and dance, and celebrate. And everybody there knows I'm bisexual. We've got gays. We've got lesbians. We've got transgendered.

And even straight ones, straight people. And I have to tell a little story here, because at one the gatherings, we were doing something called Milky Way. And I went up to this guy, and I knew he was straight. But he's open and very cool. And doing the Milky Way, basically, we pour chocolate sauce on their nipple, and then-- or caramel sauce in my case, because I don't like chocolate, I'm allergic. And then we suck it off.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

After I finished his nipple, after I hang on. After I--

SPEAKER 2: Sugar, substitute things like butterscotch.

SPEAKER 1: Well, after I finished working on that little nipple, that boy turned to me and he says, I didn't think I could get feelings like that from a guy.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 5: Surprise.

KIT: That is Pop Rocks.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 1: Yes, hello.

SPEAKER 5: It's very simple. You substite butterscotch syrup if you can't eat chocolate.

SPEAKER 1: But that's the beauty of the pagan community. We're that open minded. And it's-- the things I've learned from being with these people and being-- we are a family, just like we are in the GLBT family of choice. And we're very open and very loving with one another.

SPEAKER 5: Gigi, have some ideas here. You asked where you are. And then I have some more important things to mention. Where I'm at as a pagan and as a Wiccan is that I am an initiate. And I've come, after a period of transition, and maybe struggling with my beliefs, I've come to an acceptance of the basic principles. And I'm learning more about this chosen path of mine. And I'm very interested in it.

And as far as being transgendered, I've struggled with it and have come to the acceptance that I am transsexual. And will be transitioning. I'm half way out of the closet and will be coming completely out of the closet in one to three years. I'm writing a book right now, which will push me wide out into the open.

A couple more important points. I am finding that I'm drawing strength for being transgendered through my study of paganism and Wicca, and vice versa. I'm also finding that the pagan community at large, because you did ask about this, is by and large, very, very supportive. And I'm getting very little static. To be truthful, there was one exception. And I will spare you most of the details.

I did have report problems after the last CMA Beltane campout, Beltane being the big spring festival. But just the same, the vast majority of people are very, very accepting and open.

AERIS: If I may, Aeris here. When I was first making contact with other pagans, I had for some time considered myself pagan after having perused various pagan paths through the time honored method of reading a book.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 5: Never fails.

AERIS: Yes, but there are too many people who read a book and then consider themselves as experts.

SPEAKER 4: Very true.

AERIS: But I had some doubts. I wondered what was going to happen. I wondered if they were going to accept me as, in my case, not only bisexual, but also a transsexual. And I was worried because most pagan religions and Wicca, very especially so, emphasize a Goddess and a God and their union. And it is a sexual union. There's lots of sexual imagery that and symbolism that runs throughout these religions.

SPEAKER 1: It's very dualistic.

AERIS: And it came across as appearing very heterosexual oriented. But when I got in the community and I started meeting these people, I realized that may be a particular symbolism that they work with, but that they are themselves very open and accepting of all people, and of all ways of expressing gender, if you will. And so I felt very comfortable and at home when I finally made contact with others.

SPEAKER 1: And I think you bring up an important point in all this. And that is this sense of dualism. I know that there's a lot of people in the GLTB community that are-- pagan community that are working on new rituals and new interpretations that aren't so dualist. And there's traditions from the past that are non-dualist.

I mean, we mentioned two spirit early in the show, the pathway of the American Indians that were partly male, partly female. They lived both roles. And it was a blending and a kind of bending of this dualism. And it was very accepted in ancient societies. In our society, we've polarized the two poles and made it so separate and something that's like the two ends can never meet. And that's what I like about paganism. It brings it back together again.

MERLIN: I think for the gay community, I think that might be part of the struggle. Because with that dualism, again, we talk about the male and the female. And as gay people, as lesbians, as take your pick-- it's a thing of-- where we get that message of male and female drilled into us from the straight world, the whatever-- so much that it's very hard for us to connect to the idea of that dual male female within our spiritual beliefs. I think that's often a problem.

SPEAKER 4: Merlin, I'm glad you brought that up, very glad for all of you. Because this is extremely important. One thing that is not taught among most pagan paths is that the Goddess and God are one, yet they are twain. It can be male and female in the same body there's nothing wrong with it, as I've said.

SPEAKER 1: I'm a hermaphrodite.

SPEAKER 4: You know what I say? Goddess bless you. Because we all follow the path of the Goddess and the God. We are all one, yet we are separate.

AERIS: Yes, Aleister Crowley described it very eloquently when he said that essentially, I'm very heavily paraphrasing, the Divine divides itself into male and female. So that the two can experience the ecstasy of union again.

SPEAKER 5: A different way to put the same point that might be a little more acceptable to slightly more rationalistic people, the great Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist Carl Jung spoke of the anima in the male, if I'm not mistaken, and the animus in the female, speaking of the male within the female and the female within the male. So this is just another way of saying what you all were saying here.

SPEAKER 4: Well, Carl Jung, among many others, who has taken our religion, our faith, our beliefs, our paths, and has tried to reward it for their own use, has forgotten one thing. Without the goddess, you cannot have a God. And without the God, you cannot have a Goddess. As I said, they are one in the same, and yet they are separate. And in that, If we do not honor them, then we dishonor ourselves.

SPEAKER 1: Do you-- sorry, you look like you had something to say, Kit.

KIT: What this all boils down to for me, and what my whole life search spiritually, emotionally, physically, intellectually has been is balance. And when I came to paganism, I found a balance there that I never had before, an inner equilibrium, if you will. I forgot where it was said exactly. But I read somewhere that there are many paths to the same center. And that's basically-- we're all moving towards the same center, even though we're not walking down the same path.

SPEAKER 1: Cool. Well, I'm getting the wrap it up sign. We do have a couple of books we want to recommend. The first one is by Oak, Ash, and Thorn, Modern Celtic Shamanism, DJ Conway. And I haven't read some of these. The next one is Green Witchcraft, Folk Magic Fairy Lore, and Herbcraft by Ann Maura.

SPEAKER 4: Gig, if I may say something. In bringing these books tonight, I wanted to introduce something of basic paganism. And I'm talking about the grassroots of our belief that will help a lot of people understand better of who and what we're about. Celtic Shamanism falls very much along the same line as my own Native American beliefs, what I was raised in.

For me, they showed me a lot of things that I didn't know before, no matter what I read. But they go even further. This is the reason why I do suggest to different pagans who are still studying, trying to find their own paths.

SPEAKER 1: There's a lot of websites too. There's another book I'm being shown, Wicca for Dummies.

SPEAKER 5: Or Wiccan Witchcraft. We were going to bring this tonight, but like dummies, we couldn't quite find it. It's actually a very good book.

SPEAKER 1: But there's also a lot of sites on the internet to check out. I can't think of any right offhand, but any search engine will bring a whole host of them.

AERIS: Yes, one very good website that not only carries lots of news about the pagan community but also has links to other sites is called The Witch's Voice, the address is www.witchvox.com. that's W-I-T-C-H-V-O-X. And they carry lots of current news. They carry reviews of books and festivals. Interviews with different personalities, various editorials. They have question and answer sections. And of course, lots of links. I think they have more than 5,000 links right now.

KIT: I've seen that website. It's a pretty good.

SPEAKER 1: The one thing I would like to say is be careful when you're searching. There are some groups out there that are not quite on the up and up. Use good judgment when you search these sites. And really try to explore and ask questions.

SPEAKER 5: Finally, listen to the lyrics of the song.

SPEAKER 1: And Kit's got a--

KIT: Yeah, I have a burning desire to say this. Just remember when you're reading a website or whatever, that what you're reading is somebody's interpretation of their own truth.

SPEAKER 1: Yes. And if you have any further questions, feel free to email me at bihouse@flash.net. And come to Bi Camp.

SPEAKER 5: In the background, we're hearing music supplied by Alyssa. It's a group called Velvet Hammer.

SPEAKER 2: Actually they're changing their name to Dream Tribe.

SPEAKER 5: And the name of the cut is--

SPEAKER 2: "Blessed Be." And it has some very meaningful lyrics. I suggest you all listen to it.

SPEAKER 5: Thanks for bringing it. And thank you, Gigi. Thanks for all-- to all our guests. This is something we need to talk about more and more and more. And get out of the broom closet. Once they know us, they don't hate us.

SPEAKER 16: Yes, now it's time for the After Hours News and Views with Big Roy and Chris.

BIG ROY: Yes, I'd like to welcome everyone to this week's edition of After Hours News and Views.

CHRIS: What happened to the "Bitch is Back"? We forgot Roy's theme song.

BIG ROY: All right, any rate.

CHRIS: Hey, we milked that cow. We milked that for as much as we could.

BIG ROY: I know that's right. But Chris, we've got very special-- a very special long-distance shout out tonight to Kituk down in Bali, Indonesia. Is listening to us over the web. This afternoon, they are 13 hours ahead of us.

CHRIS: So tomorrow afternoon.

BIG ROY: They are listening to us at 2:30 in the afternoon PM. And got a couple of birthdays to give out. Both out there in row Sharon. We have a birthday for Brandy Sachet and for Randy--

CHRIS: Brandy and Randy?

BIG ROY: Brandy and Randy.

CHRIS: It sounds like a cheesy cheerleader movie from the '80s I remember.

BIG ROY: Happy birthdays. And Randy, I will get that letter out to you. Starting off This Week's edition, top news story of the week. If you have not heard, if you have been on the planet Mars, if you have been dead and you finally just got resurrected, president Sean Carter of the Houston Gay and lesbian Political Caucus resigned his position as of this past Wednesday. Jessica Redmond, who is the--