

PRESENTER: Don't you love volunteer radio.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Up on the airwaves to everyone. Up on the airwaves, just turn the radio on. Turn your radio, turn your radio on.

DOROTHY ALLISON: This is Dorothy Allison, author of *Bastard out of Carolina* and numerous trashy pieces. You're listening to *This Way Out*, the international lesbian and gay radio magazine.

JESSE HELMS: Demanding that society accept as normal a lifestyle that most of the world's religions consider immoral and which the average American voter instinctively finds repulsive.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Sin and corruption all over the place. God decided to end this wicked race.

SPEAKER 1: Until Christmas Eve of 1991, Mel White was one of the religious rights shining stars. He was an award-winning Christian filmmaker, a pastor and seminary professor, and the ghostwriter of books, autobiographies, and speeches for Billy Graham, Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker and Oliver North, as well as for such Christian supremacist luminaries as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. White's torturous 30-year effort to reconcile his conservative Christian upbringing with his sexual identity is chronicled in his book *Stranger at the Gate; to be gay and Christian in America*, published by Simon & Schuster.

White is currently the Dean of the Cathedral of Hope in Dallas, Texas, one of the largest congregations of the worldwide predominantly gay and lesbian Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community churches. He talked about his earlier successful religious career and the contrasting turmoil in his personal life with Rob Thomas during a book tour stop in Jacksonville, Florida.

MEL WHITE: I began my ghostwriting for Billy Graham. And once you've written for Billy Graham, everybody else wants you. So I went on to write Jerry Falwell's autobiography *Strength for the Journey*, I wrote Jim and Tammy Bakker's biography, I wrote Pat Robertson's campaign book, *America's Dates with Destiny*, wrote Criswell's autobiography, *His Name is Criswell* and he is the father of modern fundamentalism, Billy Graham's pastor *Standing on the Promises*, and a lot of other books and speeches for people like Ollie North and others from the religious right.

ROB THOMAS: And what period of time was this? What years?

MEL WHITE: Beginning with Dr. Francis Schaeffer, I did his television series in Switzerland in '79 and then went to work with Billy Graham in the early '80. And by the time '89 came around, I'd written for them about 11 years, then I had to quit. When the religious right-- when the radical right they call them now, began to bash lesbian and gay people, I realized that as a gay man, I could no longer be a part of their operations. So though my agent was Irving Lazor and my publisher was Simon & Schuster and I was really working as a hired hand, I couldn't even continue that because they got into such rhetoric against lesbian and gay people.

ROB THOMAS: How do you as a religious person reconcile dealing in a religious life with people like this?

MEL WHITE: I spent 35 years of my life believing the rhetoric that lesbians and gays were condemned by God. I spent all of those years getting electric shock and aversive therapy and exorcism and various kinds of reparative and remedial treatments trying to overcome being gay. I was married, I had a family, and yet all of my sexual orientation was same sex. So I hated myself. I thought for sure I was something really rotten.

I bought into the rhetoric. I hadn't discovered then that sexual orientation, hetero or homosexual, is a gift from God. It's not something we try to change, it's something we embrace and celebrate and live with integrity. But I didn't know it when I was working for the religious right. I thought they were correct. So I wasn't working there under some kind of subterfuge. I was trying desperately to go along with the party line. Now that I realize that leads to craziness and to discrimination and to death, now they think I have really turned against them.

In fact, I wrote each of them individually for over a year trying to get them to meet with me personally to talk about the damage their rhetoric was doing, but they wouldn't meet with me. So now I've come out publicly to say, they're not only a danger. The radical right is not only a danger to lesbian and gay people, but to all people who love democracy. These people are into theocracy. They really want to see themselves be Gods regents until God's return. They really want to see their own ideology superimposed upon the free choices of Americans, and including lesbian and gay people. They want to see us eliminated.

I mean, this is serious business. Leviticus 20, they use all the time. A man who sleeps with another man, wrote Moses, is an abomination and worthy of death. Of course, it's in a context of so is a child who sasses his parents. So is a man who sleeps with his wife when she's menstruating. So is a person who eats pig or wears clothing with two kinds of fabrics. Something's going on there that doesn't have to do with home with homosexuality. And at any time in the six passages in the Bible, they're talking about actions, not orientation.

They're talking about sexual promiscuity, they're talking about temple prostitution, they're talking about old men using boys and little girls in sexual purposes. They're talking about gang rape as in Sodom. And none of those things gay or lesbian people believe in. So none of them really refer to us. But now instead of taking the millions of verses about love and grace and justice and mercy and peace, they're picking six lines and condemning a whole population of this country, and it's sad.

ROB THOMAS: What would you say to people who are gay or lesbian and feel that there is nothing for them in organized religion?

MEL WHITE: Gays and lesbians are universally rejected by the synagogues and churches of their past, with great exceptions, I might add. There are pastors and priests and rabbis who have reached out at their own personal cost to welcome us into the family of God. And I thank them for that. Our problem has been in the past that we've thrown the baby out with the bath. We think because the church rejects us by misusing scripture that God rejects us. And in fact, it isn't true.

The church has always been the great resistor of change, the church is always condemned for people not believing what culture teaches. The church misused the Bible to condemn Galileo and Copernicus. In 1633, the pope put Galileo under house arrest for saying that the sun, not the Earth, was the center of the universe. Just last year, Pope John Paul II 330 years later, said, we misused the Bible. We did wrong. They've been using or misusing the Bible to back slavery, to back women's injustice issues, to keep children down, to keep Black Americans out of their churches.

The Bible has been misused traditionally for many things. That doesn't mean the Bible isn't a great and holy book. That doesn't mean we can't trust it when it speaks of matters of the spirit. It just means that these people who wrote it were part of their culture too and had limited access to ideas just like we do. So when I say the lesbians and gays who say God doesn't like me, the church doesn't like me, I say, don't confuse those two. God loves you. God loves all people who are struggling. God loves people who do justice on behalf of those who struggle. So get rid of religion that's harmful and love God.

Walt Whitman said, look back on everything you've been taught and throw away everything that's insulting to your spirit. Go back to your traditions. Find the good things and get rid of the bad. Remember, our spirits-- we're like body and mind, but we're also spirits. And when our spirits shrivel, we're in trouble. The only way to out-love our enemies is to have great and growing spirits, and that comes right straight out of these great spiritual traditions. It would be a shame to miss all of that.

One of the things that we've learned is that if a lesbian or gay person, you will vote for their rights because we are not like the caricatures that Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson and others are saying against us. But if you think you don't know a lesbian or gay, you're more apt to believe all of these lies. So it behooves every American to find a lesbian or gay and know that person more intimately. Try to find out what our lives are like, try to see how we're suffering right now, how these initiatives lead to violence against us.

The boy in Tyler, a town near us in Dallas, was 23 and the son of Baptist missionaries. He sang in the old Baptist state choir. Five of Tyler's kids took Nicholas out into a garbage dump, stripped him from the waist down, and lay him prostrate on the floor and began to shoot him. They shot him in the fingers and feet, and they shot him in the genitals and all the way up until the 29th shot went through his brain. And when they're asked why they murdered this innocent young man, they said because he was a faggot.

That kind of killing, that kind of death comes directly from this rhetoric that Pat Robertson and Falwell and people like Lou Sheldon and the Wildmans and the AFAs of this country are doing to us. And they have to realize, one day they will be held accountable for the results of this rhetoric. We need to be proud of who we are. We need to say to the world we're not at all like those caricatures. It's important for us to celebrate who we are because we've denied it and hated it so long that now that I can say I'm gay, I'm proud, and God loves me without reservation, that's a major and important step. And it fits me now into the community of acceptance of heterosexuals and homosexuals alike.

SPEAKER 1: That was Mel White, the author of Simon & Schuster's *Stranger at the Gate; to be Gay and Christian in America* in conversation with *This Way Out*'s Rob Thomas.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

I can see clearly now the rain has gone. I can see all obstacles in my way. Going to the dark clouds that had me blind. It's going to be a bright, bright sunshiny day. I think I can make it now that the plague is gone.

After hours, after hours.

GROUP: Let's just read. We're the five lesbian brothers. And when we're in Houston, we listen to *After Hours* on KPFT at Houston.

Too much pressure. Too much pressure.

SPEAKER 2: My money, there's no musical form or uplifting of the spirits in the uptempo syncopated beat and catchy hooks as ska music. Born in the studios and dancehalls of Jamaica in the late '50s and early '60s, ska music made stars of such performers as Prince Buster, Laurel Aiken, Don Drummond, Desmond Deckard, and the Skatalites. Come and enjoy an evening of ska music with Houston's hottest live act, The Suspects, with Rod Richard and Ramon at the controls, mashing up the dance floor with the classic and revival ska recordings.

A big ska night out at the Market Square Brew Pub and Cafe, 809 Congress between Travis and Milam, Friday, September the 9th featuring The Suspects, Rod Richard, and Ramon at the controls. Other special guests to be announced. All proceeds to benefit KPFT Pacifica radio, 90.1 FM.

SPEAKER 3: Oh yeah, nice benefit coming up on September 9th for KPFT and you'll get to enjoy lots of good ska music. They've even talked about trying to do a little bit of a remote, so that all during that evening, they can not do the whole thing, but give you five or 10 minutes here and there. So that should be fun.

SPEAKER 4: Sounds like it.

JEWEL GRAY: Well, so now you know a little bit more about Mel White.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah. Yeah. Boy, that was incredible.

JEWEL GRAY: I saw him interviewed. I cannot remember on what I saw. I want to say it was like Bababa Wah Wah.

[LAUGHTER]

But it may not have been. I just saw him interviewed, I think-- I'm thinking that maybe it was Dateline, or one of those programs, 2020 or something. And he talked, and his children talked, and his wife talked. And his wife put it much more succinctly than I could. She said it was a difficult situation for everybody but we loved each other, and we still do.

MAN: Isn't that the whole idea?

JEWEL GRAY: He had to go this way-- you know, he had to go this way. That didn't include me. That didn't mean we didn't love each other. And that gay people could love any number of people. They weren't just in it and-- in it for themselves, so to speak. So that she felt like that he was still part of her family. He was welcome there.

And they made it clear that-- he and his lover made it clear that she was welcome. I think he's been together now 13 years.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah?

JEWEL GRAY: 12 years.

SPEAKER 3: With his lover?

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah, with his lover. That's a long time. That's a long time.

SPEAKER 3: There's nothing to say that a gay man and a lesbian cannot have a loving relationship.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right.

SPEAKER 3: I've seen it happen many, many times, and that good friends of mine are married.

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah. Yeah, I have friends-- well, I used to have friends who were straight--

SPEAKER 3: And you know, it wasn't a marriage of convenience or anything like this.

JEWEL GRAY: Right, right. Somebody that we know and love I believe was in that situation, and have two wonderful children. Boys. And I think you talked to her just the other day.

SPEAKER 3: Absolutely.

JEWEL GRAY: I see that we have two of these with Juan Paloma on it. I'm just-- I'm--

SPEAKER 3: Oh, he's got-- yeah, he's been-- he does really great things here.

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah, like I like--

SPEAKER 3: If you can catch his columns in the Post.

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah, his column on August 18 was, Yes, Even Good Kids Can Commit Hate Crimes.

SPEAKER 3: Yes.

JEWEL GRAY: And he talks about Michael Brzezinski's killing.

SPEAKER 3: I think that that came out before the big revelation.

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: Well, I don't know. Well--

SPEAKER 3: I'm having to run--

JEWEL GRAY: He talks about just his killing. It doesn't talk about who or what. Yeah, it doesn't talk about who or what. But, you know, that was a lot of talk. You know, I was talking to some of the other night who said they don't go to so-and-so bar. And I said, well, why don't you go there? You know, I'm looking for somebody to slam. [LAUGHTER]

I said, well, why don't you go there? And he said, well, that's where they picked up that guy, killed him. And I said, well, that guy was at several bars that night. Yeah, but that one is the one they think he picked him up at, that they found him at. And said, you know, that was just random.

SPEAKER 3: Oh, absolutely. And it wasn't at the bar--

JEWEL GRAY: It was random chance. It wasn't at the bar. It was--

SPEAKER 3: Wherever he parked his car.

JEWEL GRAY: Right. And they'd seen him take money out of the ATM. And that was just random. It just bothered me that this person was suddenly not going to frequent the neighborhood because that guy was killed there-- was picked up there.

And the truth is, you got to be on your toes everywhere you are.

SPEAKER 3: Absolutely.

JEWEL GRAY: I mean, even at the mall, I mean, there was a police officer killed two years ago up at Greenspoint Mall, taken right out of the parking lot. Now, you just-- there's just no-- frankly, there's no safe place anymore. You have to be on your toes all the time.

SPEAKER 3: If you have that attitude, you'll never leave your house.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. Yeah, that's right. In other words, it's just kind of like sex these days. There's no such thing as safe sex. It's safer sex.

SPEAKER 3: It's safer.

JEWEL GRAY: There's no such thing as a safe place to be anymore, it's safer places to be.

SPEAKER 3: Mm-hmm.

JEWEL GRAY: So while you're in these places that are not as safe as you like them, then you have to be hypervigilant and on your toes. And you cannot depend on the Q patrol. As much as they are out there, and as strong as they are, and as wonderful a group they are, they cannot cover all this ground.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah, yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: Even the police department can't be there. You have a certain amount of responsibility to learn about your surroundings, and make sure that you're aware of what's going on around you. Even then, I'm not even sure. But that sure gives you a fighting chance. If you see somebody approaching you, you don't know, then don't worry about looking like a fool. Leave.

SPEAKER 3: Absolutely not.

JEWEL GRAY: Don't worry about looking like a fool. Turn around and go the other direction. Find cover, find a place where some other people are at. Think about these things before you hit the street. Don't have to make these decisions while you're standing on the street being confronted and you don't have time.

SPEAKER 3: And don't drink so much that it mars your judgment.

JEWEL GRAY: Or that you look like you've had too much to drink. Because that's the way these people target people. The weak, and certainly stumbling, and stupid from too many B-52s at the local bar has got to be like a red flag. So be alert. Be conscious of what you're doing when you're out there. And remember, you're not alone. This is not something that's exclusive to the gay community.

SPEAKER 3: Oh, no. Absolutely not.

JEWEL GRAY: So it's everywhere. You're not the only one having to do this. Anyway, off the old soapbox. We just want-- we just want you to take care of yourself wherever you go.

SPEAKER 3: Mm-hmm, yes.

JEWEL GRAY: I mean, if you're at the record store at the mall, or if you're down here at Slick Willie's, you know, take care of yourself wherever you go. Because we want you here next week. And you know, if--

SPEAKER 3: And every week after that.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. We want you to be-- we want you to be out there listening to us and doing your thing and helping us along here.

SPEAKER 3: Well, Matt just walked into the control room.

JEWEL GRAY: Uh-oh. Honestly. The phones lit up.

MATT: Someone just called from Q-Patrol. They said last night Channel 11 was following them around on their foot patrol and in the car.

SPEAKER 3: Absolutely. Yes.

MATT: They're doing a story on the murder, and on what Q-Patrol is doing to combat it.

SPEAKER 3: Great. Isn't that great?

JEWEL GRAY: They should be doing one on the switchboard and the hate crimes hotline.

SPEAKER 3: Yes.

JEWEL GRAY: I have talked to a thousand people recently, and nobody just wants-- it's like everybody's fussing, there's no place to report it. But by golly, there is a place to report it.

SPEAKER 3: There is a place.

JEWEL GRAY: And I just cannot get them to--

SPEAKER 3: Well, the problem is we don't-- the Switchboard does not have money to advertise it.

JEWEL GRAY: Right.

SPEAKER 3: And so it's kind of tough to getting the word out.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right, so if you have money to advertise, you getting help-- you get a hold of the people at Switchboard. I'm sure they would like to hear from you. But there is a place to report a hate crime. And like I tell people, a hate crime is one that is committed against you because you fall into a certain category.

It is not robbery, unless they're screaming faggot at you. We're taking your money because you don't deserve it, you're a faggot. Now, that's a hate crime. But robbery is not. And that's why these boys will not be charged with a hate crime. It's because their intent was to rob.

SPEAKER 3: Why does it-- why does it have to be one or the other? Why can't it be both?

JEWEL GRAY: And if it is both, why's it-- I mean, if it both does happen, why is it they cannot take the more serious crime, which is the hate crime. Because robbery is not going to-- the hate crime is a much more serious penalty.

SPEAKER 3: If a woman is raped and murdered, she is both. She has not just been raped, she has not just been murdered.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right.

SPEAKER 3: That may be a poor analogy, but--

JEWEL GRAY: These boys will not-- and you know, I was thinking about this yesterday, when I started seeing the faces of those young men who robbed that bank up northwest here, the 12 of them that were in some gang up northwest of here somewhere. And went out to this little dinky town northwest of here and robbed the bank and killed a little lady at the cemetery.

SPEAKER 3: Oh.

JEWEL GRAY: Big thing, big thing. You're not reading the paper? And I thought about those kids. And I thought about those kids from the Woodlands too a couple of years ago when they killed Paul Broussard. And I'm looking at these kids and I'm thinking, Jesus, you know, if this is what we're going to be dealing with 20 years down the road, these people who are doing this now, we've got to start making some serious changes.

We're going to have to start getting involved and committing ourselves to doing something about this. And that means even the youngsters out there need to start saying things to their friends about that kind of stuff is not OK.

SPEAKER 3: That's right.

JEWEL GRAY: Even, I mean, you see somebody and-- you see somebody-- I was just looking at something about that. Maybe it was Juan Palomo's article when I was scanning through it. You see somebody doing something like the people at Slick Willie's.

Perhaps, and I would hope that this would be something of the conversation that was given there over the t-shirt was, sir, this place is open to the public, and we cannot have you discriminating at one section of the public or another.

SPEAKER 3: And you know, and I'm guilty of that. I've seen stuff like that in public, and I really didn't like it, but I didn't have the guts to say anything.

JEWEL GRAY: I think it's time that we started battling that.

SPEAKER 3: And I kick myself later. Now, why didn't I say something?

JEWEL GRAY: Because that thing, and those things like that are the things that build up to the madness that goes on. Paul Hill, who killed the abortion doctor in Florida recently. The little things that started his direction, you know? And if we can't-- I mean, what can we do? We can't do anything to this man that will compensate for the loss of those two people.

SPEAKER 3: No.

JEWEL GRAY: Nothing. And what we could have done was simply address his, and other people like him, when they were espousing this kind of hate and, bottom line, discrimination, we should have been addressing it. And I think that we should address it. We should tell people. I have people around me quite often who use that ugly-- the ugly word for people of color.

SPEAKER 3: Oh yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: And they happen to be people of color. And I quite quickly and bluntly tell them, look, you know, I'm sorry. You know, that word offends me. I don't care if it offends you or not. That word offends me. And if you're going to use that kind of language, I wish you would use it somewhere else. Because it's just not OK.

SPEAKER 3: It's not OK. It makes me uncomfortable. Yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: And I don't care if you're that person, or if you fall into-- it's just not OK to use that kind of language.

SPEAKER 3: Well.

JEWEL GRAY: Not in the way it was used.

SPEAKER 3: Oh, OK.

JEWEL GRAY: And I'm--

SPEAKER 3: OK.

JEWEL GRAY: Calling oneself or calling someone else, it's just not-- it's just not acceptable. And I think when we address those kind of things, the little things, then the big things don't grow from them.

SPEAKER 3: How do you feel about faggot and dyke?

JEWEL GRAY: Well, you know, there's a toss up, you know? Faggot and dyke. Dyke has been something that I've always been comfortable with. I've always been comfortable with that. I don't think that's-- I don't think faggot and dyke is something that they've ever been able to take away from us. I think we were faggots and dykes long before the straight people started screaming that at us.

SPEAKER 3: And it depends on how it's used too.

JEWEL GRAY: Exactly. And--

SPEAKER 3: There's a nastiness when it's used against us.

JEWEL GRAY: Exactly. And that's the key.

SPEAKER 3: And there's a playfulness when we use it with each other.

JEWEL GRAY: That's the key, is the motive for using it. I mean, you know, I have no problems when, you know, what's her name, McCullers, the Southern white writer. I want to say Alistair, but that's not it.

SPEAKER 3: Carson?

JEWEL GRAY: Carson McCullers, the Southern writer, who uses those kind of words in metaphorical pieces of literature that describes a time and period that really shouldn't have been there, and gives you the emphasis, and addresses that issue with those words. I think that's totally appropriate. But when I see one guy on a bus screaming at another guy off the bus, you now, you blankety blank blank.

SPEAKER 3: No. Yes, yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: Or the guy on the freeway, you know, screaming out his window that kind of stuff.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: That kind of stuff is just not acceptable. It's just-- it's more than just a word when you use it that way. It's a hate crime, actually. It's assault by-- it's an oral assault, is what they call it, an oral assault, and in some cases can be a criminal offense. I mean, maybe misdemeanor, but it can be a criminal offense.

SPEAKER 3: It's pushing it. But it's just in bad taste. And it's psychologically unsound.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right. And I was watching *Mississippi Burning* the other night. And I've watched it before, and I've said this before. Bottom line is that for some reason, we human beings need something to be better than. And what we've done is conveniently taken subgroups of the greater population and decided to name these groups, or use these groups as the people we are going to be greater than.

SPEAKER 3: Sure, create this hierarchy.

JEWEL GRAY: Exactly. And the only way that is maintained is by keeping those people in a less than-- in a less than way so that they cannot compare themselves to the greater than.

SPEAKER 3: And the other side of that is that it's so much easier to feel better about yourself by putting somebody else down than by improving yourself.

JEWEL GRAY: That's right, by being somebody worthy of feeling better about yourself. I agree. And boy, I'm telling you--

SPEAKER 3: That's sad.

JEWEL GRAY: This stuff gives me a headache when I start thinking about it.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah I know.

JEWEL GRAY: It's like-- I watching the *Infamate U-- Infamous*-- no, the *Infinite Universe* last night. Tom Selleck, boy, if you want to watch somebody gorgeous. He does this series, and it is really gorgeous.

SPEAKER 3: Really?

JEWEL GRAY: It's a good series. It's on, I believe, The Learning Channel. Maybe the Discovery Channel. I don't know. But I'm not watching Tammy Faye. I'm watching the Discovery Channel or something.

SPEAKER 3: See, I don't have cable.

JEWEL GRAY: Tom Selleck has done the series, and he is just a hunk in these, where he's talking about the universe and such. But another deep pit of thought is this thing about is there other life in the planets. And I'm thinking, someday, maybe this whole planet will be thought of as a sub-group of the greater picture.

[LAUGHTER]

You know?

SPEAKER 3: That's right.

JEWEL GRAY: Because the other thing that struck me, because he was giving a relative explanation of possibilities of other life in the universe. I know this is taking a real strange turn here.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah, but hey.

JEWEL GRAY: But he was talking about this thing, finding other life. And he said that out of the universe that we can count, out of what we can see out there, there are something like 620 billion planet-- billion solar systems that could support planets. And he said, if you take it--

SPEAKER 3: That's a lot.

JEWEL GRAY: Yes. He said, if you take only half of those who life might have begun on, then that cuts it down to 320 billion places where life could have begun. He said, if you just take 1/10 of 1,000 percent of that, that say that life began and has evolved into a higher consciousness, like he compared us to.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: The numbers came up to be somewhere around 620,000 different places where life, they figure that that's the odds that in, what we can see, that there's probably 620,000 places where life is--

SPEAKER 3: Doesn't seem out of line.

JEWEL GRAY: So out of all those thousands, and someday, I just think poetic justice for this planet would be some guy like out of the Hitchhiker's Guide comes by. We've decided to relocate you.

[LAUGHTER]

You've got 30 seconds to complain, and we're going to blow you out of the sky.

SPEAKER 3: Doing this interchange here, and so you've got-- you're in the way.

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah, like a old house.

[LAUGHTER]

I love that. But it's very possible. I mean, talking really wild out tonight. But if you think about as remote a possibility as it may seem, but someday we may all be in the same shoes that we find that we put other people in to feel better about ourselves. Anyway. That's my soapbox for tonight. The better than ourselves speech.

I find that-- is this the same-- is this the same-- is this the same as last year? I mean, this thing at MCCR. Is that the same last year at the clinic? Is he the same person?

SPEAKER 3: Yes. Yes, it's Ralph. Yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: I've never really connected the two.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: Well, that's odd.

SPEAKER 3: He did this a couple of years ago, and it was like, it blew everybody out of the water. And so he's-- been Ralph Lasher to conduct Homosexuality And The Bible Seminar.

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah, he did--

SPEAKER 3: Yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: He's done that before. Yeah, you said that.

SPEAKER 3: There was a-- oh, in fact, in the-- you know what, what it is, what you're remembering?

JEWEL GRAY: What?

SPEAKER 3: Is the first issue of OutSmart had that article about him.

JEWEL GRAY: Oh, that's right. It was so good. That's right.

SPEAKER 3: And we spent like 20 minutes talking about that.

JEWEL GRAY: You're absolutely right. It was good. And I remember now. He wrote that. It was pointed out that some of the holes in the religious right-- give me that picture back, though.

[LAUGHTER]

I've got one here too. It's next to my heart, heart, heart.

SPEAKER 3: Sarah G. Pulls this-- give me that picture.

JEWEL GRAY: Anyway, he's doing this workshop at MCCR.

SPEAKER 3: Mm-hmm.

JEWEL GRAY: Oh, cool. What did I do with the paper that had that on it? Did you take it?

SPEAKER 3: No, it's underneath the new issue of OutSmart.

JEWEL GRAY: Right, right. And I'm like, wow, is this the same guy? Oh yeah, here it goes. It says he'll be doing this-- God, this could be a year old, for--

SPEAKER 3: Well, he does it every--

JEWEL GRAY: September 17th.

SPEAKER 3: Yes, he does it every year. Yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: 17th of September, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at MCCR. If you want more information, you can call 861-9149. You know, and--

SPEAKER 3: He points out a lot of things, you know, about homosexuality and the Bible. Like there really wasn't-- the word homosexual is a 20th century word, and it didn't show up in any Bible until the '30s.

JEWEL GRAY: Right, it's just some particular reverends who decided to read it with other things that's found in the Bible.

SPEAKER 3: You know, and everybody says King James this, King James. King James was a queen.

JEWEL GRAY: He sure was, and a homophobe on top of it.

SPEAKER 4: But I mean, the homosexual community, I mean, we honor the religious people all the time. I mean, what do we call each other. Mary?

JEWEL GRAY: Mary.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 3: Hail Mary.

JEWEL GRAY: Hail Mary.

SPEAKER 3: Ooh, we'll get phone calls on that folks, at 526-5738.

SPEAKER 4: Yeah, I'm waiting.

[LAUGHTER]

JEWEL GRAY: Did you queue up the other tape?

SPEAKER 3: I have queued up the other tape.

JEWEL GRAY: *Priscilla*-- let's talk a little bit about *Priscilla*.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah, come on, Sarah G. Get in here, because you saw this.

JEWEL GRAY: Sarah, saw *Priscilla*. If you haven't heard about *Priscilla*, it's-- here, talk about it.

SPEAKER 3: And Debra gave it away Friday night, about who *Priscilla* is.

SPEAKER 4: I was working late that night.

JEWEL GRAY: When you heard it?

SPEAKER 4: I was driving home, and I said--

JEWEL GRAY: And you were over it.

SPEAKER 4: Thanks a lot.

SPEAKER 5: I just can't believe the nerve of some people.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 4: So I said, Mary.

JEWEL GRAY: It's a lot like when Queer Nation hung a sign over off 59 today. What's it say, Sharon did it? It says s somebody did it.

SPEAKER 4: Yeah, it says Catherine did it.

SPEAKER 3: Catherine did it.

SPEAKER 4: I know nothing about that.

SPEAKER 5: From *Basic Instinct*.

SPEAKER 3: Yeah, so we're not going to tell tonight who *Priscilla* is.

SPEAKER 4: No. No, we would never do anything like that.

SPEAKER 3: This is *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.

SPEAKER 4: I would pay full price to see it for a second time.

SPEAKER 3: Whoa.

SPEAKER 4: I was laughing-- I mean, and it got a little bit real once in a while. But they made, you know, out of every situation, they did a show. I just thought of Judy Garland, you know, and they said like, let's fix up the barn and make a show.

SPEAKER 3: What is the movie about?

SPEAKER 4: It's about three drag queens. Well, two drag queens and one transsexual.

SPEAKER 3: Oh, OK.

SPEAKER 4: Transgender.

JEWEL GRAY: One guy is straight. Two of them are gay.

SPEAKER 3: The transgender role is--

SPEAKER 4: No, no, no, they're all gay.

SPEAKER 3: Oh, they are?

JEWEL GRAY: I thought one of them was straight.

SPEAKER 4: No, no, no. He was married to a lesbian.

JEWEL GRAY: Oh.

SPEAKER 4: It was a marriage of convenience.

SPEAKER 5: There you go.

SPEAKER 3: Oh, OK.

SPEAKER 4: We're not trying give it too much away, Jewel. I don't want to-- I don't want to say too much about it, because it's just good all the little turns that it takes.

SPEAKER 3: Oh, really?

SPEAKER 4: But I mean, the costumes.

SPEAKER 3: It's their adventures through Australia. Through small towns.

SPEAKER 4: Through small towns.

SPEAKER 3: If you can-- I can't-- I just can't imagine. I mean--

JEWEL GRAY: So it's better than the Copa on a Friday night.

SPEAKER 3: Oh, but the Outback in Australia is like the Wild West. It's-- I just--

JEWEL GRAY: It still is, yes, like the Wild West out there.

SPEAKER 3: And there are three drag queens.

JEWEL GRAY: Well, you know, they have a strange thing that they do in Australia. They call it the loop.

SPEAKER 3: The loop?

JEWEL GRAY: Yeah. It's a strange kind of thing. We don't do much of that here. As close as it comes is the elderly retired people traveling around their RVs around the country to RV parks. They have a thing in Australia where people actually travel around, because Australia is a country a few roads, and very few of them go out to the Outback. But those who do are traveled by people like gypsies.

And not that they are gypsies. They travel like gypsies. They travel in trucks and in RVs, and they make what they call the loop. They do the loop. And they settle for, in certain seasons and certain years, for certain periods of time in certain areas of the country. When it's warm, they go here. And when it's cooler, they go there.

And when it's time for this festival, they go here. And they make the loop around Australia doing this. And there's-- I used to know some people, a minister, as a matter of fact, and his wife, who would go around on the loop ministering to people who were doing the loop, because it was like this whole culture of people doing this. That's what these guys are doing. They're doing the loop.

SPEAKER 3: There's something else about England and Australia that's very different from the US, in that drag is very accepted in a lot of areas. It's, in fact, I was reading an article on it lately, and a lot of comedians do drag. They call it pantomime.

And especially in December, there's some big deal about doing Christmas pantomimes where guys dress as women and do kind of plays and stuff. And it's a big traditional thing and everybody looks forward to it. So drag is a bit different in those--

JEWEL GRAY: Remember the old Monty Python drag races?

SPEAKER 3: Yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: 12 drag queens, down on the mark, get set, go.

[LAUGHS]

That was great.

SPEAKER 3: That was some of the funniest stuff about these guys dressing up as middle aged women. And yeah.

JEWEL GRAY: Canada is the same way. They have a very different view of drag. And they really get off to it. And these-- from what I understand from the movie, and I have not seen it, but I did see some promos on it, and I have read some stuff about it, is that these guys, for some reason or another, are doing the loop. And they're doing this-- it's-- I can't describe it.

SPEAKER 3: Oh, OK, OK.

JEWEL GRAY: It's this traveling around that you do. You just get on this loop, and you travel around Australia this way. And people repeat all over and over and over again, kind of thing. So closest we got here is the retirement people who hit the certain RV parks periodically.

Anyway, we have a short piece, talking a little about *Priscilla*. I forgot the paperwork on it. Do you have it? It's too late for that now.

SPEAKER 3: Uhh.

JEWEL GRAY: Let's just go to it. Oh, here it is.

SPEAKER 3: Here's the paperwork.

JEWEL GRAY: So we have a short piece here talking about this movie. Terence Stamp, who used to be doing some real heavy macho movies, is one of the stars of this, one of the drag Queens. So this promises to be good but.

There's some music in this that they talk about. The Village People, got to "Go West" in it, and "I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor. "Mamma Mia" by ABBA, and "Finally" by CeCe Peniston. And it sounds like a good soundtrack. So we're going to let you listen to this, and you can make up your own mind.

SPEAKER 3: OK.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

(SINGING) Yeaah, together, we will go our way, together, we will leave someday, together, we will start life new, together, this is what we'll do, go West, life is peaceful there, go West, lots of open air, go West, to begin life new, go West, this is what we'll do. Go west, go west, go west.

ALONSO DURALDE: What do you get when two drag queens and a transsexual pack up their wigs and sequins to troupe across the Australian Outback? Imagine an MGM musical with a dash of *La Cage aux Folles*, and a touch of *The Living End*, and you've got *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.

This is Alonso Duralde for *This Way Out*, an outrageous comedy that encompasses both wild drag numbers and queer family values, *Priscilla* should enchant gay and audiences alike. British star Terence Stamp takes a wild divergence from his dramatic he-man roles as Bernadette, a transsexual and former drag artist, who is convinced by his friend Tick, played by Hugo Weaving, to join him on a bus trip to far off Alice Springs to play a month-long engagement at a casino. Also along for the ride is Adam, a mousy queen played by Guy Pearce, who has his own motivation for the journey.

ACTOR 1: We're unplugging our curling ones and going bush for this year. Why would you possibly want to leave all this glamour for a hike into the middle of nowhere?

ACTOR 2: You really want to know?

ACTOR 1: Yes.

ACTOR 2: Well, ever since I was a lad I've had this dream, a dream that I now finally have a chance to fulfill.

ACTOR 1: And that is?

ACTOR 2: To travel to the center of Australia, climb Kings Canyon as a queen, in a full length Gauthier sequin heels, and a tiara.

ACTOR 1: Great, that's just what this country needs, a [BLEEP] in a frock on a rock.

ALONSO DURALDE: As with any good road picture, all the participants find their dreams and learn about themselves on the way. Tick is reunited with his wife and son. Bernadette finds love from an unlikely suitor. And yes, Adam gets to climb his rock in full feathers.

Like most drag performers, *Priscilla* might not hold up if you stare at its flaws for too long, but put it under a spotlight, and it's unstoppable entertainment. Costume designers Lizzie Gardner and Tim Chappel and drag makeup consultant Strykermeyer top themselves in each scene, with more and more over-the-top looks for the stars.

Except for a scene in which Adam tries to make himself look like a real woman, this isn't passing drag. It's kabuki drag, performance art drag, Macy's Thanksgiving day parade drag.

The musical numbers are simply extraordinary. An outrageous melange of grand diva disco, ABBA tunes, and melodramatic torch songs. And where else can you see a tribe of Aborigines complete with wind instruments accompanying a lip sync performance of "I Will Survive."

GLORIA GAYNOR: (SINGING) I, I will survive, oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I'll be alive. I've got all my life to live, and I've got all my love to give. And I'll survive, I will survive. Hey, hey.

Writer director Stephan Elliott describes his personal affinity for the film's score.

STEPHAN ELLIOTT: This is what we grew up on. Australia didn't have a culture then. There were still no identity in the '70s. It was everything was coming out of America or England. So I grew up on all that stuff and. I'm really proud of it. And I love it. I've got the world's most embarrassing record collections.

ABBA: (SINGING) Just one look and I can hear a bell ring, one more look and I forget everything. Mamma Mia, here I go again, my, my, how can I resist you? Mamma Mia, does it show again, my, my, just how much I miss you.

What really makes *Priscilla* so wonderful are the strong performances from Weaving and Pearce, and especially from Stamp. While none of the three men are gay, they make their characters funny, strong, and dignified, and not above being outrageous. And while Stamp had to endure a daily ordeal of makeup, wigs and corsets for his role as a woman, he did enjoy at least some of his wardrobe.

TERENCE There was this purple silk coat that I used to wear if it was cold. I didn't really have any warm clothes with me.

STAMP: That was a costume that I wore. And it was funny, because when I arrived back in England, I went from beginning of hot Australian summer into middle of English winter. And I didn't have anything, you know?

And they'd given me a few of the outfits. And one of the things that I had taken was this purple silk coat that's padded. And when I got off the airplane at Heathrow and I walked out into the building and I realized it was freezing cold, without a second thought I had the suitcase open and I had the purple coat on. I thought, my God, I've become a cross-dresser.

ALONSO There's a sense of pure joy ringing throughout this movie that makes it absolutely irresistible. So throw on

DURALDE: something fabulous, and high kick your way to see *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* when it opens in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco on August 10th, and around the United States on August 26th.

For This Way Out, I'm Alonso Duradle.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

CECE (SINGING) Finally, you've come along, the way I feel about you, it just can't be wrong, if you only knew, the way I feel about you, I just can't describe it, oh, no, no, finally, it has happened to me, right in front of my face, my feelings can't describe it, finally, it has happened to me, right in front of my face, and I just cannot hide it. Finally, oh, yeah. Yeah.

TERENCE Hi, this is Terence Stamp, Bernadette in *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* on This Way Out, the international lesbian and gay radio news magazine.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

BRENDA: Hi, I'm Brenda.

SPEAKER 5: And I'm Tranae Chardon. And we're a diverse house with messages of love and peace. And we'd like to say, please, let's stop the violence. You know, the violence we treat each other.

Before we can change the world's views about us, we must make a change between ourselves. And that means racism, homophobia, heterophobia, and prejudice against our own, especially our feminine men-- you know, female impersonators. After all, thanks to them, we have Stonewall.

Just love yourself, and a light of love will shine around you. And remember, support your local community activities. This is 90.1 KPFT, After Hours. Without you, there would be no us.

(SINGING) Gimme, K P F T. Gimme, K P F T.

Gimme, K P F T.

We love you. Peace.