

TIFFANY PENN: It's more possible to do more of a fantasy in a video atmosphere than it is to do on stage, especially the fact that the record was such a small stage, really, your fantasies are limited. But to be able to have the medium of video, I've seen some really hot stuff come out of that competition.

CHRIS ARASIN: Most definitely, all three last year, they were excellent presentations.

BOBBY: A lot of people don't realize, last year was one of the closest contests they've ever had. I think the point spread was five points.

TIFFANY PENN: Oh, I had no idea.

BOBBY: Yeah, it was that close between the winner and the third runner-up.

TIFFANY PENN: What are the responsibilities of Mr. Prime Choice after winning? I don't really know. Is it just more fundraising?

CHRIS ARASIN: More or less. I think it's more or less what you can put into it afterwards. The majority of it is, of course, acquiring the title and raising the funds prior to it. That's one thing, though, that I do want to pursue after winning the title if I'm lucky enough this year, is to go ahead, and continue to raise funds throughout the year, and to maintain the name, especially since I found out recently that it is a two-year title, and just keep it going, ongoing.

TIFFANY PENN: Do you have a goal, a monetary goal? Are you willing to go on record?

CHRIS ARASIN: What would you like? What would you like?

GREG: Over the two-year period, I would love to raise at least \$20,000.

TIFFANY PENN: That would be fair.

HOST 1: That's a good thing. That's a good goal.

CHRIS ARASIN: I think that would be-- that can be done.

HOST 2: Like any fundraising organization, you make out of the title what you put into it.

CHRIS ARASIN: Absolutely, absolutely.

JIMMY CARPER: And you enhance it by doing so.

TIFFANY PENN: And with \$20,000, you can give to more than one charity.

CHRIS ARASIN: Most definitely, that's good. And we've talked about this in other shows, sometimes a little controversial issue, there could be too many contests sometimes, and it is what you do with it. Some people in other parts of the country get a title, and you never hear from them again. And Greg I know is the exception because you're always out there. And that's great.

GREG: I try.

JIMMY CARPER: Dude, you've been out there for a long time.

GREG: I love you too, Jim.

JIMMY CARPER: It's obvious you're 40 at least if you're entering--

[INTERPOSING VOICES].

GREG: Just barely.

You have been in this community a lot longer than me.

I'm very proud to say that I've been in this community for over 28 years now. So yes, I'm very proud of that fact, and still going, going strong, but I can't do it without the help of all of my friends, and associates, and people like Tiffany, and Jim Nixon, and Jim Sarojini, and yourself. And I couldn't do it without everyone. The entire community is what keeps me going.

TIFFANY PENN: Well, and what I've learned is that there are so many people who can't do it for a year and can't do it for two years, but they can come out for this show, or they can come out for that show, and they want to help as much as they're able.

And for people like you who are going to run for these titles, you make it possible for them to mail in a check and to feel like they've given to an organization even though they can't give the kind of commitment, whereas I've always said, I'm going to be in the bar anyway. I might as well have a patch on my vest.

CHRIS ARASIN: At least one.

TIFFANY PENN: At least one.

CHRIS ARASIN: 1,000, no. You're like the energizer bunny.

TIFFANY PENN: Who, me?

CHRIS ARASIN: No, Greg is.

TIFFANY PENN: I think we're competing for that title.

HOST 1: You just have a free--

TIFFANY PENN: Is that a title? Yeah, I think we need Mr. And Mrs. Energizer Bunny.

CHRIS ARASIN: But you know what happens when you switch the batteries in that? He keeps coming and coming.

TIFFANY PENN: Do you know after seven years, my batteries finally wore out? After seven years.

GREG: Oh come on.

TIFFANY PENN: It took me seven years.

HOST 1: I wonder when she had had a new boyfriend.

TIFFANY PENN: Actually, they were out on him.

JIMMY CARPER: In what device?

CHRIS ARASIN: Jim.

TIFFANY PENN: Stop, it's a family show.

CHRIS ARASIN: Talk about the rabbit here.

HOST 2: I thought maybe you change the batteries, they became a male or a female.

TIFFANY PENN: No.

CHRIS ARASIN: I wish we could find batteries that did that.

GREG: Most definitely.

HOST 2: Well, that's great. This leads us in to Tiffany. Tiffany Penn has been here in Houston many years. If you want to tell a little bit about yourself?

TIFFANY PENN: I don't know if it's many years. I think people give me a lot more credit. I actually have only been in the Houston community since 1995, so I'm on my sixth year. So I got 22 more to go before I catch up with Greg, but darn it, I'm chasing you.

GREG: There you go.

TIFFANY PENN: I'm chasing you. So I've been here for about six years.

JIMMY CARPER: Well, then you made a big splash when you first came to Houston with FIST.

TIFFANY PENN: Absolutely, in fact, I was telling Jim what my history was with the community when I was-- and I even hate to admit how old I was, because I shouldn't have been allowed in bars back then, but it wasn't in Houston.

But in 1995, I was 21 years old, so it was good. I came out. I was 21, so I was perfectly legal. But I actually started before that with the Gay and Lesbian Alliance of Central Texas, and I actually, believe it or not, graduated from Baylor University.

Yes, and praise God, thank you for Baylor. That was where I got involved in the gay and lesbian community. My stepfather that had raised me actually came out to me when I was a sophomore in college. So yeah, by my junior year, I finally got up the courage to actually get involved in the community up there.

So they have their Gay Pride Festival Labor Day weekend sometime in September each year, and I finally got up the courage to call him up. And I said, well, we're doing our Gay Pride Festival. Come out. And he said, oh no, there might be a lot of people. I don't know.

But by December, I had actually made a couple of meetings, and in December of 1993, they elected me to their board of directors, and then the board elected me as Secretary. So I had a two-year term for that. And in fact, when I came to Houston in '95, I was still going back and forth to Waco to fulfill my obligations as secretary of that organization.

So it was in 1994 that we went up to Stonewall 25, and we marched in Stonewall 25 from Waco. And I met two leather lesbians from Oklahoma City. And actually, one of them, TJ McKenzie, she was a titleholder that year. I believe she was Miss Oklahoma Leather.

No, she was not. She was she was a boy. She had an Oklahoma Drummer Boy title because it was very interesting to have a woman actually have a Drummer Boy title. And I fell in love with that woman. And I looked at leather, and I said, I want to be that.

So I went out to the Harley-Davidson store and bought me a whole bunch of leather before I knew you could get it custom-made. Thank you very, much, Greg. Thank you for making it a lot simpler for me.

GREG: Live and learn.

TIFFANY PENN: And it was because of my association with TJ McKenzie and then, actually, Shadow, who ended up being Miss Gulf Coast Leather within the next couple of years, they got me involved with FIST. And so I joined FIST in '95, and by 1996, I had gone to Austin to Texas Leather Pride, and I won Texas Leather Pride.

Competed against Cougar who, of course, has made her own name in the leather community, and she was very sweet. She was very upset after the competition, and she said, but if I'm going to lose to anybody I'm glad it was you. I'm glad it was you.

CHRIS ARASIN: She's great.

TIFFANY PENN: Yeah, and then the next year, I won Miss Gulf Coast Leather. And then after that, I was vice president of NLA, and it just keeps going and going.

[FUMBLING]

Oops.

CHRIS ARASIN: So leather is the lifestyle.

TIFFANY PENN: Leather is absolutely the lifestyle.

CHRIS ARASIN: I never knew that story.

TIFFANY PENN: Yeah, that's my whole story in five short minutes.

CHRIS ARASIN: Well, we have an interesting leather event coming up with NLA Houston, National Leather Association Houston, that's called Spring Iniquity.

TIFFANY PENN: Yes, actually, I was involved with FIST for a couple of years, and it was actually Dean Walderat and Mike Geynzer who approached me. They were drinking coffee at Crossroads. Yes, they were. And I crossed the street, and they approached me, and they said, we would really like for you to join NLA.

So I joined NLA that year a few years ago. And I believe it was the next year that I was elected vice president. And I was run captain that year for Spring Iniquity, and so now they have asked me to do it again. So I'm run captain for spring iniquity 10, so I'm cleverly calling it XIX, X-I-10, XIX, And Spring Iniquity 10, it's going to be April 20 through 22nd.

I am the run captain for it, and I think it's OK for me to announce that I am the only candidate for president this year. So it's spring iniquity. Hopefully, somebody has voted for me. I know I voted for me.

CHRIS ARASIN: I'm judging Dennis voted for you too.

TIFFANY PENN: I'm assuming that in Spring Iniquity 10 on Sunday afternoon, I will be announced as the new president for NLA Houston, which I'm very proud of.

CHRIS ARASIN: Wow, we hope so.

HOST 1: Great.

CHRIS ARASIN: Good.

HOST 2: I have a question for you. I have a question for you. Since it's the 10th Spring Iniquity, is it x-rated?

TIFFANY PENN: It's on the lake. We actually included-- it is safe, sane, and consensual. Is that an acceptable answer?

JIMMY CARPER: It's always an acceptable answer.

TIFFANY PENN: It's always safe, sane, and consensual. But this year we have something that's really neat. We tried to do a barn party a couple of years ago, and unfortunately, a ferocious storm, and I think it was called a tornado, came through and destroyed the barn that year. So we've always been trying to find a different way to have a special play party of people who wanted to do that.

So this year we have actually teamed up with the Reef. It's just south of Houston. It's at 288 South in Almeida Ginella. And we've teamed up with them, and they're going to sponsor us out there.

So on Saturday night, April 21st, we will be out at the Reef from 6 o'clock until the next morning. So we're actually going to be able to camp out there if we want to. We'll be providing transportation for people to go out there from the RIPCORD, and we'll bring them back in the morning. So we have our whole run schedule put together.

CHRIS ARASIN: Well, just go through it. It starts Friday.

TIFFANY PENN: It starts on Friday night. Registration is at the RIPCORD. If anybody wants to put anything in our run packet, we will be stuffing our envelopes on April 19th at 7 o'clock at RIPCORD. So if anybody wants to get anything to us, you'll need to bring 200 copies of anything that you want to the RIPCORD on April 19th at 7 o'clock. But registration will begin on April 20th, and I'm assuming it's going to be at 9:00.

CHRIS ARASIN: Probably 9:00, 10 o'clock, something like that.

TIFFANY PENN: Yeah, I'm not assuming the first cocktail party is. Those are still coming in. We've got a couple more weeks to decide that. But it'll be registration on April 20th at the RIPCORD. Saturday morning, we'll wake up, and we'll go to Mary's, and will be at Mary's. We are considering putting another bar into the run on Saturday afternoon from 2:00 to 4:00.

I would really like just the fact that NLA Houston does promote pansexuality and the fact that NLA has been sweet enough to have the confidence in me as a woman to lead the organization. I really want to make an extra effort to go into chances in-between in the barn.

So I'm working with Andre now, and I do believe that on Saturday afternoon from 2:00 to 4:00, we'll be there. And then we will have our break, let people go home and get their tents and anything that they need, and then at 6 o'clock, we'll start out at the Reef.

We'll have dinner out at the Reef at 7:00. And we'll have a DJ out there, so we've got a lot of really great things that are going on out there, some games. We'll have some X-rated games, Jackie, out of the Reef on Saturday night; safe, sane, and consensual play. We've got a lot of equipment that HPEP is providing for us along with WIPS, which is Women in Power Society. So we'll have equipment donated by them.

And then on Sunday morning, we're going to hopefully-- actually, this is unofficial. We're hoping to have Sunday morning brunch at the 611 because they go on ahead and do a brunch anyway. So we want to bring our people in to support 611, mostly because they're the home bar for the Lone Star Boys of Leather.

And so we want to try to support all the bars, even if they're not the typical bars. You can never have too many bars that are going to support leather, so we want to try to bring our run in there. So we'll do brunch there, and then of course, we'll do our award ceremony on Sunday afternoon at the RIPCORD.

CHRIS ARASIN: That's always good. Give out your awards and things.

HOST 2: One question, Tiffany, while we're on the subject about the Reef. Say you're going to have dinner out there around 6 or 7 o'clock. Is there going to be adequate parking area out there, or is it just transportation to and from bars?

TIFFANY PENN: Yeah, absolutely, based on the fact that we are going to have liquor out there, we are going to have dungeon masters and mistresses that are going to be there in case people want to play. But we are going to provide liquor because there are quite a few people who come out to a run not to play. They want to come out to a run like a family reunion. I treat a leather run like a family reunion. You see these people a couple of times a year. We all get together.

So we do have the opportunity since everybody's in Houston, and it's very accessible to Houston. It's just south of town. We do have adequate parking out there. We'll have a gate guard. One of the dungeon masters will be a gate guard, so we'll have a gate guard there. And everyone who wants to park, they have plenty of parking, so we'll have parking, but we also wanted to provide transportation for the people who will be drinking.

CHRIS ARASIN: Good idea. My question was because the Misfits have to bartend that night at the RIPCORD, but we'd like to come out there for dinner, so we're going to make sure that we could still do that.

TIFFANY PENN: Absolutely.

HOST 2: You know how much it is?

TIFFANY PENN: The run this year is going to be \$40 before April 1st, I believe, \$40 for non-members before April 1st. For members, it'll be \$35. If you actually get it to us after April 1st or you register that night, it'll be \$50 for non-members, \$45 for members. And our dues, in case anybody is interested in becoming a member, our dues are \$30 for our local dues and \$30 for our international dues.

What I would tell people is this is definitely the year to get involved with NLA and pay your membership because as president, one of my first things that I'm going to do is that we need to get-- our local dues are due at a different time than our international dues.

So we need to make an effort to get both of those in line, which means that anybody who becomes a member this year, I will put it to our membership to vote for it with the board, that whoever joins this year will have their membership dues count for a year and a half while we get ourselves caught up with international. So if you're going to join, \$30 is going to buy you another half a year this year.

CHRIS ARASIN: Now's the time.

TIFFANY PENN: Now's the time. Now's the time.

CHRIS ARASIN: Now, if someone's interested in the Spring Iniquity run, how can they get some more information?

TIFFANY PENN: All of the information, the run packets, and all the information and a cute little picture of me, is posted on-- thanks, Ken Finkel, our secretary and webmaster-- our website is www.nlahouston.com, so N-L-A-H-O-U-S-T-O-N. Houston so we are a .com.

CHRIS ARASIN: Great, so they can get more information.

TIFFANY PENN: They can get more information. Our statement of purpose is there. Our rules for membership are there. Spring Iniquity is there. We're posting updates as we have them. Our meetings for planning, if anybody wants to get involved, are every Friday night now until the event at 7 o'clock on the patio at RIPCORD.

HOST 2: And you can also pick up those applications at the RIPCORD, right?

TIFFANY PENN: Absolutely, and any time that we're bartending, obviously. We will be bartending at Mary's on Easter Sunday. So I believe that we will be there for the high heel races. But our bartending weekend, our bartending schedule is the third Sunday of every month and the third Saturday of every month. So the third Sunday of every month, we're at Mary's, and the third Saturday of every month we're at the RIPCORD.

CHRIS ARASIN: OK, that works out. That's why we have calendars here, to write all this down.

TIFFANY PENN: Absolutely, absolutely.

CHRIS ARASIN: Now, let me see. You did it this day, because you'll find out you'll have a lot of conflicts.

TIFFANY PENN: Yeah, usually, it's Sundays at about 4:00 at Mary's unless they're having an event. On Easter, they're going to have an event, so we'll probably be out there about 1 o'clock. But typically, we start it about 4:00, and then on the Saturdays at RIPCORD, we start between 9:30 and 10:00, and we usually go till about 1:00 or 1:30.

CHRIS ARASIN: That's always fun. Let's talk a little bit about women in leather.

TIFFANY PENN: When I came out with FIST, we had quite a few women in leather. And in fact, every chance I get, I have to thank Carolyn Roberts because--

CHRIS ARASIN: Well, FIST being?

TIFFANY PENN: FIST being Females In Search of Trouble, and it is a women's social organization strictly for women who have an interest in the BDSM lifestyle, the bondage and sadomasochism lifestyle. So you didn't have to be practicing. You didn't even have to want to do it. But you have to be supportive of it, and you have to be interested in it, and you want to have to learn, and you want to have to hang out with other women who are into that kind of thing.

So that is how the organization started. And really, truly, a couple of years ago, I found myself as the only member of the organization. And so I put the colors in the closet and said, you know, I'm just going to wait. I'm just going to wait. I'm just going to wait.

CHRIS ARASIN: Let it simmer down a little bit.

TIFFANY PENN: And this year we have seen so many women come out. I was talking to Andre, and Andre was telling me that he would really like to have more of a leather presence, especially in the barn because he said there's a little corner of the bar in the in-between where these women come in and leather vests that don't have any colors on the back of them, but they come, and they hang out.

And he said, I would really like to have somebody come in that would be willing to talk to them and would be willing to take that part of the bar and have that part of the bar. He said, I'll give you that corner. You tell me whatever you want, and we'll make that part of the in-between a leather bar for women. And so I really have to applaud Andre with what he's done with the bar.

CHRIS ARASIN: That's great, so they're open to that.

TIFFANY PENN: So they are absolutely open to that, absolutely encouraging that. And I know that the Misfits just had Mistress Selena pledge their organization.

HOST 1: Absolutely, which we're very excited about.

HOST 2: They're doing very well.

TIFFANY PENN: Well, and you've had women before, so I don't want to discount that. You have a couple of women anyway.

CHRIS ARASIN: This is the first straight woman we've had.

TIFFANY PENN: Oh darn those straight women. Who invited them? But really, truly out of respect, I would say that I certainly don't want to take a leather women's organization and try to bombard the RIPCORD with it. I really appreciate the RIPCORD for even allowing me in, and I love the fact that myth is now absolutely destroyed. We see more and more women in the RIPCORD. But I want to support the fact that we do have women's bars who are going to support the leather community.

GREG: That's always going to be there, I think, unfortunately. We are one community, but unfortunately, anywhere you go-- and I hate to call them factions, but in your mindset, there's still a lot of people who think that females have to go to the female bars and the males have to go to the male bars, and that's not the case.

TIFFANY PENN: Well, I think they just don't want to share their bathroom with me. Do you know that-- OK, I am publicly going to come out and talk about Houston right now.

HOST 2: And you heard it here, folks.

TIFFANY PENN: All right, you heard it here first. When I go up to Dallas and I go to the Eagle in Dallas, they have the men's restroom and they have the women's restroom by law, and there could be a line of 10 men at the Eagle. And when I go up to stand at the back of the line and wait my turn, they all put me at the front of the line, grab the man peeing in the stall out by his hair, and they put me in that bathroom, and they let me go first.

At the RIPCORD-- I love the RIPCORD. I'm there every Saturday night, don't get me wrong, but I still have to stand in line for the women's bathroom. And I'm just mad about that.

JIMMY CARPER: And you're the only woman there.

TIFFANY PENN: I'm the only woman there. And so they think that it's just OK for me to stand in line, but I'm here to tell you guys that I--

JIMMY CARPER: And stop messing it up too.

TIFFANY PENN: Stop peeing on the toilet seat and let me go first.

CHRIS ARASIN: Put the lid down.

HOST 2: Actually not peeing on the toilet seat.

TIFFANY PENN: Because I put the lid back up when I leave. I try to have respect. But it just really upsets me that in Dallas-- but I think that it's because in Dallas, they have a much stronger female community. There's no doubt.

Linda Blakeslee up in Dallas, there's a number of women that really truly-- honestly, I probably should say their names, and I'm just not remembering them right now. But they have such a strong organization of women up there with their NLA Dallas chapter in particular.

CHRIS ARASIN: Why is that that it's not the case down here? They may be here, but you maybe not see them.

TIFFANY PENN: I'm certainly not going to doubt that they're out there. I think that what has been my personal observation as being a straight woman as a member of FIST is that of the lesbians who were wanting to be out and who were wanting to be involved in leather, I think that they had some issues with me because the fact that in leather, we typically hang out in gay bars.

They felt that the perception was is that we were more of a lesbian organization. There were certainly more lesbians than there were straight women. And so we did have some issues with the fact that I was a straight woman as president of this organization, and they felt that people assumed I was a lesbian, and that it was my responsibility to act like a lesbian.

So we did have some dissension there even in the women's community. So we have it everywhere, but what I have found was the issue a few years ago was the fact that we couldn't just be women. We had to be lesbian women and straight women.

CHRIS ARASIN: Then the toilet thing really wouldn't matter.

TIFFANY PENN: The toilet thing really didn't matter. Can I just tell you a funny story about how I grew up? OK, back in the days when you're young enough to share a bathroom stall with your mother and there's nothing funny going on, my mother and I went into a bathroom stall together.

And there was a little tinkle on the seaty. And so my mother took the toilet paper, and she ripped it, ripped that toilet paper out of it. And she wipes down the seat. She goes, damn lesbians. And I looked at her, and I said, what do you mean? And she said, well, you know, all those lesbians pee standing up.

So I am horrified as a child because my grandmother had taught me to never sit down on the toilet seat. So my grandmother teaches me not to sit down on the toilet seat, and my mother tells me that lesbians pee standing up. So I'm trying to figure out, where do I sit, and where do I stand? Where am I still standing? Where am I a lesbian exactly, when I'm crouching on top of the toilet? My mother's come a long way.

CHRIS ARASIN: I'm sure your brothers wipe now.

HOST 1: That's great. I would normally ask you, did you come to a conclusion? But I don't think we're there now.

TIFFANY PENN: I pretty much sit down now. But so for me, the biggest issue with women in leather is the same issue that gay men have been dealing with everywhere. It's gay men, it's gay men who like to dance on a dance floor, and it's gay leather men. Do you see? We're still divided within our own communities.

And so I truly believe that the biggest issue with women in leather is straight women in leather and gay women in leather, and can we really truly be in the same organization together? So that that's my challenge. That's my challenge, is to try to work with lesbians and make them understand that it's not about our sexuality.

For god's sake, us of all people cannot talk about sexuality being an issue, and yet women are just catty like that. But gay men are too. I'll give you that, don't get me wrong. And so we're dealing with the same division, but the problem is that we're dealing with the division with less people. So now I've got five people in an organization divided.

CHRIS ARASIN: So now your goal is to increase that number. And I guess the question I would have is say there's some women out there that are interested in leather, but they don't know where to start. What would you suggest for them? What would they do? What should they do?

TIFFANY PENN: I would say that a place to start, a safe place to start as a woman in the leather community, is to email me, tiffanypenn@hotmail.com, T-I-F-F-A-N-Y-P-E-N-N, and let me--

Really truly, honestly, I'm not saying I never would have been successful in this community, because I truly believe that my heart is in the right place and that that's what people see. But the fact that Carolyn Roberts took me out. She was my mentor for FIST, and she took me out to every bar. And she said, you be nice to this woman, because if you're not, I'm going to hurt you. And she would have. And she's still my biggest fan, and I'm so grateful to her.

And so I really, truly believe that-- and this is why FIST is FIST, is the fact that we want to try to bring newcomers out into a safe place. We go meet for dinner. We go bowling. We go do whatever else we're going to do in a normal atmosphere in plainclothes, and then you allow one of us like a Selena, or a me, or somebody else. You allow us to take you out with us to the bars and introduce you to people so that you feel comfortable coming back in there by yourself just in case you're by yourself one night.

So I think that it's the fact that there's safety and fun in numbers. And so I think that if somebody was going to start out, find that corner in the barn, and I'll meet you there.

CHRIS ARASIN: And just really ask. Tell people, just ask. Selena, how did she join the Misfits? Did you talk to her about that?

GREG: Actually, Selena came to us. She was a member of House of Highway.

CHRIS ARASIN: And still is.

GREG: And still is. Actually, it was on the board there and came in through Louie and interested in Louie and then met the Misfits, came in as an associate member, and then went through Louie this year. And after one year of Louie, she pretty much decided she needed to join, so right after that.

CHRIS ARASIN: She likes that. I know from all that. And see, that's great, and it just takes that first step. And a lot of people are a little scared to do that. That's why we have to be open with them to just ask people.

TIFFANY PENN: Well, especially, if you're a woman, there are a lot of people in a lot of different cities around the country who don't know it's OK to be a woman and walk into the RIPCORD. And I'm sure there are plenty of women out there right now who don't know that it's OK to walk into the RIPCORD. I've seen as many as five, six, seven, 10 women in the RIPCORD. At any given moment, and I really don't feel that they're given any problem other than having to stand in line in the bathroom.

But I do know that we had quite a few women come down from Oregon one year. They came down for a competition. And they came into the RIPCORD, and they had their colors on, and they were ready. They were ready for anybody to give them trouble.

And I said, whoa. And I walked in, and I said, has anybody given you any trouble? And she said, no, you were right. Because I caught them the night before, and they said, well, we've heard about the RIPCORD, and we're just going to go in there, and we're going to make them like us.

And I said, nuh-uh, not in my bar, you're not. I said, you go in, and before you bow up, you see how people treat you first. And she said, you were right, Tiffany. Nobody gave us any problems. Nobody looked at us funny. They've all been very nice. People have even bought us a drink. So I think that for any woman looking to get into leather, you just have to have the courage to take that first step. But where do you step?

CHRIS ARASIN: See, that's always been tough. We had some marvelous people I was so lucky to meet. My guides are to use as a source of a mentor.

TIFFANY PENN: Absolutely.

CHRIS ARASIN: I don't know who the women would use.

TIFFANY PENN: Yeah, I would say that we have more now than we've ever had, and that's how come I feel the need to get FIST back together again. And I would say absolutely me, hopefully, I could be trusted as a mentor for people.

I would say that anybody in that corner at the barn would probably be worth going and talking to, and I would say that-- or actually, it's the In-Between. He said they hang out in the In-Between. And I would say Selena would absolutely be a great source. I would say HPEP is also a great source.

CHRIS ARASIN: What is HPEP?

TIFFANY PENN: HPEP, you guys have to correct me. Is. it People Exchanging Power?

HOST 2: Yes.

OK, Houston People Exchanging Power, and it's the Houston chapter of PEP. And they are predominantly heterosexual. I know that Travis showed up at one of our planning meetings for Spring Inequity a couple of weeks ago.

And when Mike Ganza was still alive, Mike and Travis and I had all tried to bridge this gap between the straight community and the gay S&M community. And when Mike died, of course, there was so much going on that Travis felt that it died with Mike.

So he came back into the meeting, and he's always put us on his personal website, houstonbdsm.com, and he's always had a blurb about us. And he says the sweetest thing. He says, if there are good guys in the leather community, NLA Houston are the good guys. And he's just always been very complimentary of our organization, and he's always stood by us.

And so they came out to the Spring Inequity planning meeting to say, we want to be here. So they're providing our play equipment. They're going to be dungeon masters. They just had their S&M ball tonight. We had, actually, John and Tim as representatives of NLA Houston. They were there, and they did a scene there at S&M ball. We had boys also attend. We were bartending at the RIPCORD, so we had dual loyalties that we had to deal with, but we did absolutely make sure that we had representatives there for their S&M ball.

But Houston area PEP, I think, is a great place to feel comfortable. They have so many events. I can't even begin to tell you how many they have, because they have subcommittees. And I think Travis was upset one night. He said, yeah, we just had 200 people at our last meeting. That's it. And I thought, my gosh. Give me that kind of membership, because we've got about 35, 35 to 40 in NLA Houston right now.

But I do know that houstonbdsm.com would tell you all of those events, and that would be a very safe place for straight women if they wanted to go, and lesbians. They have quite a few lesbians who are involved in HPEP right now. And I would say Eros is also another organization.

CHRIS ARASIN: Not familiar with them.

Unfortunately, I've lost touch with them. They used to meet every Saturday, I believe, at 2 o'clock at Redyards upstairs, but I really, to be honest with you, don't know if that's correct, but it's E-R-O-S, Erotic Rose Society. House of Heighway is another organization. I believe that they have a website, as well.

So there's a lot of places to go. It really just depends on what you're looking for. I think that even admittedly, HPEP would say that they're more involved in newcomers. They're really there to be a group of people where, you're new. Let's get you where you need to go.

Whereas NLA Houston and a lot of the leather organizations on the gay S&M side, these guys have been doing this for years. These are old guard leather people who adopted safe, sane, and consensual. And so we've got a next guard thing happening. So it really depends, I think, that for a newcomer, something like NLA Houston seems to be very daunting. I still believe that we're considered the granddaddy of the leather organizations.

Especially from the heterosexual perspective, I know that HPEP has a lot of respect for us. And so it seems very daunting for people to say, wow, am I really good enough to be in NLA? And I think that most of our members were invited to become members. I don't think that we've ever had anyone unsolicited ever join our organization.

CHRIS ARASIN: And see, it's a pansexual organization, so anyone is invited to join up. And hopefully, they can go to the Spring Iniquity, find out a little bit about NLA.

TIFFANY PENN: Come hang out with us. See if you like us.

CHRIS ARASIN: And try it out for a while.

TIFFANY PENN: Absolutely, well, and that's half the battle. In the Misfits, they're a testament to that. You have to find a group of people you like hanging out with.

HOST 2: Absolutely.

JIMMY CARPER: Exactly.

HOST 1: I want to bring up something. We have a lot of fun on this show always, and we do a lot of educating also, especially in the leather communities. There's been a situation that we've all heard about in Arkansas with a trial-- I think it's almost ended or has ended-- of two gay men who inadvertently killed a 13-year-old boy.

Now, I know there hasn't been a backlash yet, but there's bound to be one, and I want everyone's opinions here on how this relates, if any, to the leather community.

I know that NLA International does have a legal fund that they have, and that that is one of our statements of purpose, is that we assist in any legal way that we can in S&M trials and adoption suits or if it's straight or if it's or if it's gay. I think that the backlash is going to be, unfortunately, more against the gay male community than it is going to be against the leather community.

HOST 2: It's going to be against the gay male community and probably more against the BDSM rather than the leather community, because I don't know that those people were actually involved in leather that much, were they?

CHRIS ARASIN: Well, I think it was at the activity, but I think what really a lot of people will do is they're going to take away from the fact that this is a 13-year-old boy.

TIFFANY PENN: And they're going to think that all gay men do the horrible things to 13-year-old boys.

JIMMY CARPER: Exactly.

HOST 1: And what I want to stress here is that we have always talked about safe, sane, and consensual. A 13-year-old cannot be consensual.

HOST 2: Absolutely not, exactly.

CHRIS ARASIN: So that's important to note, because that's a very touchy issue, and a lot of people don't realize the motto of safe, sane, and consensual, they just rattle off the words and don't really think about what they mean. And you have to.

GREG: There's a responsibility in some of the play that takes place in the BDSM community. You have a responsibility. In whatever role you take, a submissive or a dominant, you have responsibility to what type of play you do.

TIFFANY PENN: I actually wrote an article one time, and I was criticized for my use of terminology. When I was talking about playing, I used the term, weapons. When I was talking about flogs, or crops, or anything else that I was playing with, I said, weapons. And I used weapons throughout this article. And I actually had a woman in leather come up to me, and criticize me, and say, we don't call them weapons in my house. We call them toys.

And I said, and that is of course your prerogative, but I believe that these are weapons because I have the power to take your life when we're playing. And I want everyone to respect, including me, the fact that, if that's what I do, that we have the power to exchange life here, and that I want everyone to respect in my household the fact that these are weapons. These are not toys.

CHRIS ARASIN: A note to your boyfriend, keep that toilet seat down. Don't stand in line to the bathroom.

JIMMY CARPER: And I will see to it that people let you go first from now on.

TIFFANY PENN: Thank you very much.

HOST 2: It's funny because we're typical. And Greg and I, we'd go to Dallas. We were here at the RIPCORD, and we will guard the door, not that necessarily, you need guarding in the RIPCORD, but the first to stand in line and step in front of the door, so you can have a little bit of privacy. I never noticed that problem.

CHRIS ARASIN: I hadn't either. Probably contributed to the fact that there's not that many women in the RIPCORD. And so therefore, the clientele there is not used to the me in there.

GREG: I find it hard Tiffany would stand in line for anything.

TIFFANY PENN: I know. You think.

CHRIS ARASIN: Well Tiffany, thank you so much.

TIFFANY PENN: Oh you're welcome, thank you.

CHRIS ARASIN: And Jackie and all of us for joining us, Jim.

HOST 2: If I can, just one thing real quickly, you made the comment earlier that you're trying to bring together the straight women and the lesbian women in leather and so forth like that. And in my experience, at least here in the Houston area, I have found that the women's bars and so forth like that, the patrons there seem to be very accepting of alternate lifestyles and stuff.

In my case, I have always been accepted in the women's bars and had no problem whatsoever. So I don't think it's going to be as big a problem as you maybe think it is.

TIFFANY PENN: OK, thank you.

CHRIS ARASIN: Good.

JIMMY CARPER: Thank you. You've been listening to *After Hours*, Queer Radio with Attitude on KPFT Houston and KEOS College Station. Jim Sarojini and Greg Robinson have brought you the leather line this evening, and we'll be back next week.

In the background, i want to say Hello to and happy birthday to sweet Mama Cotton. And you can hear her every Wednesday night at the Briar patch, and this is one of her great songs for her newest album, *Desperate Old Guy*. We'll see you next week.