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00:01

If you're out on the bars tonight, you pledge the cost of one of your drinks. Okay? You know drink I don't know what to drink to the bars now 556 dollars ranges, okay? No, get the good drinks \$7 Okay, we'll accept the pledges \$7



00:18

To cover charge, we need a cover charge here to listen, folks,



00:21

really, if you can pay a cover charge to get into a bar, and you can, you can spend five or \$6 on a drink, then please, you can spend a five you can give us a \$5 donation, a \$10 pledge. Really the number here is 5265738. This is KPFT in Houston. And we really do want to hear from you. In line with what we've been talking about. We have a song coming up from RuPaul called Free your mind,



00:52

she's got her gym and I mix it with a bunch of crossfader or two 1200s just ready to let us have it



01:10

those of you who are regular listeners to this program, already know that I have led several lives in the attempt to finally reach a place of peace. In my life as a male I was married for eight years and have a daughter from that relationship lived as a gay male in a relationship that ended only due to his death in an auto accident, began my transition from male to female, while still an active member of queer nation live in a relationship with a female that I refuse to label as anything other than loving. And now I chair It's Time Texas, a political lobbying organization for transgendered people. But gentle listeners, that background pales by

comparison to our guest this evening. Al Borenstein worked as a salesman for IBM once served as first mate of a yacht owned by the Church of Scientology, and also father to daughter. Today she is a lesbian author and playwright who has appeared on many of the television talk shows. She is currently in a relationship with David Harrison. Like many other aspects of her life. This has been a fluid situation, which began as a lesbian s&m relationship, and is now a work in progress. Since David is a female to male transsexual. With this information established, it should come as no surprise. They Kate is speaking with us today about her book, appropriately titled, gender outlaw on men, women, and the rest of us. Kate Bornstein. Welcome to our show.



02:48

After that introduction, I think my head is spinning from your history girl. Thanks a lot.



02:54

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



03:17

You got to be dissatisfied with the way the world gets a hold on you. You got to be really dissatisfied with people who want to hold you in one place and put you under a microscope and say there we've got it, and it's never going to change. I never liked being held down in one place, Sara. And I found the one place I was consistently held down was in terms of gender and sexuality. No matter what I did, I could throw off the money I had growing up, you know, an upper middle class home in New Jersey, and live as a starving artist. That's fine. I could, you know, explore all kinds of stuff. But people would still point and say boy, or now as they do they try and point and say girl, and I think nope, neither.



04:12

My answer usually is yes.



04:16

I think the better answer for me is no. I used to say yes to and nail, you know, they go male or female like Well, no. Neither neither I think, you know, people can be outside of those two, I think those are two valid genders. And I wouldn't I wouldn't be upset with anybody being male or being female. But I think it's really a matter of choice.



04:37

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Well, that leads me to the first question here. I have to tell you, first of all that I absolutely ran through your book. I have I have seldom read a book that just made me go crazy. I can't put this down. I have to go through all this. I have to start by I was trying to figure out a way that I could introduce some of your concepts that in a way people would understand. And I want to use the quote from the book. You said once upon a time someone drew a line in the sands of culture, and proclaimed with great importance. On this side, you are a man. On the other side, you are a woman, it's time for the winds of change to blow that line away. Well, Kate Bornstein why do we need to be one or the other male or female?



05:24

That's the question. I've not been able to come up with an answer to, I think socially, and there's a new book that's going to be coming out. And I just finished reading an advanced copy of it by Martine Rothblatt, called the apartheid and sex. And she makes an excellent case of how gender was originally, you know, like how we were originally male and female for procreation purposes, and basically to ensure the survival of the species so that there would be enough genes from one pool and enough genes from another pool to overcome bacteria, basically. And so that, so that there were sperm makers and egg bearers, and then that's how the race evolved. But we've come so far, haven't we, Sarah, we've come so far beyond them. This is the point that Martine makes in her book, apartheid and sex, which, as soon as it comes out by it, it's a brilliant book. We've come so far, that we don't need that anymore. We have enough biotechnology to overcome a lot of this stuff. And yes, we still need to, you know, have babies and stuff. And that's going to go on for a long time. I would imagine, I can't foresee an end to that. But what is the necessity of calling somebody male? And calling somebody female? What is the social necessity for that anymore? Really?



06:55

Well, it's interesting. In here in Houston, we have, we are course in the middle of the Bible Belt. And people here insist that girls wear pink, always wear blue. And you know, you are strictly one or the other. I grew up in a Pentecostal background, which should tell you something about about me, perhaps, and I was raised in the idea that there were male jobs and female jobs, I mean, not just male or female roles, but jobs. You know, the men mow the lawn, and the women made lemonade, that sort of thing. So yeah, I'd like to think we've come a long way from that. I'm not sure.



07:31

Well, here's the here's a very interesting thing, you're mentioning a couple of things. Let me just quickly say that in the 1930s, it was quite the reverse. Boys were dressed, the little infant boys were dressed in a very manly pink, wild girls for a dainty blue. That was the feeling then boys were pink and girls were blue. And that was the way it was and then a boy would never be caught dead. wearing blue that would be assisting. So you know that's, that's changed, obviously. Also in terms of the Bible, and any great religious text, and I really love the Bible, I really do. There's so much great truth and comfort in that. But the Bible very, very, very carefully says what men do what women do, what men shouldn't do what women shouldn't do, but the Bible never says what is a man? The Bible never says, What is a woman? Never, ever,

ever? They just assume we know. And it's that assumption isn't that it's like, I understand a lot of your listeners are gay and lesbian, right? It's it's the same assumption that people that heterosexual people make, that we're all heterosexual. Well, maybe not. And what gays and lesbians have done that's so great in this culture, is challenged that assumption to the very core and entered it firmly into the culture. That No, we cannot assume any longer that people are naturally heterosexual. Well, you're you and I are Sarah. And you and I are saying and um, a lot of people with us, you can't assume we're male or female either. I'm not unless you really can say, what is a man? What is a woman? And you can ask 10 people that question, and they would agree.



09:17

You know, it's very interesting. I happened to be in the hospital, I guess it was about a year and a half ago now. And they put me in the male ward. And I was just furious with them. And they said, well, our policy is that you go in the ward by your genitals. And I thought what in suddenly it occurred to me that they in fact really did define male and female in terms of we are what is or is not between our legs. Very scary.



09:45

Yeah. And by extension, what's even scarier is what is between our legs is going to dictate how we think. I mean, you know, women have been saying this for for ever, that biology He is not destiny. Right? Keep your laws off my body. And we're just saying the same thing we're taking the inevitable new step in feminism is we're saying no biology is not only destiny, not only not destiny, it is totally irrelevant. What is between our legs does not dictate how we're going to behave in life does not dictate our math skills does not dictate our verbal skills. That's a whole other strategy.



10:35

I want to go back to your book, which by the way, folks is called Gender outlaw. And we both have a section called the Blue Book. Now with my background, I was really interested in this. And you said in the book, and then I found out gender can have fluidity, which is quite different from ambiguity. I love the concept of gender fluidity. Tell her tell the listeners a little bit about what you mean by that.



11:00

Okay, well, I need to backtrack a little bit and go over what gender ambiguity is. And just recap what we've been talking about. And what I would say generally gender ambiguity is, is you don't have to be you know, Sylvester Stallone or Madonna, you can be something outside of that you can be a female you can be a drag queen, you can be a butch Dyk these are all genders you can be a top butch dyke bottom butch dyke, you can be you know, these are all different genders gender is simply a word that means classification. That's what the word means. That's all it means. The way to classify people and people like to insist that there are only two classes male and female. Well what else in nature is two and only two and bipolar

opposites of that? Nothing. Okay, but we insist that gender is two and only two Okay, fine. I say that gender is more ambiguous than that there's a lot more ways to express identity than some some biblical jumble you're on the Bible. But says some some mandate some cultural mandate that says you can only be two so I say gender is ambiguous. More than that. I think that gender expression, how we express ourselves in a gendered way. And hearing your story, Sara just confirms that we grow don't we, we change. When I meet somebody, I am absolutely fascinated about how they're presenting themselves. And I find myself shifting in order to accommodate their presence. And so my gender is if you know, I identify mostly as a found bottom, but if I meet you know, some amazing from bottom up, the top of me is going to come out. And so like I kind of shift It's a dance isn't that and I think that this fluidity to something that allows us to to express ourselves more fully in the moment. Oh, God, I'm setting so New Age. But but it's just that freedom to be what you are when you are at and not to say okay, well now okay, we got it. You're You're a transsexual or lesbian. Well, maybe I'm not. I don't know this one I'm being today. I don't know when I'm gonna be tomorrow.



13:25

I've always, I occasionally go and speak to classes at various universities here in Houston. If the queer Oh, well, I'm sort of the resident freak. At least that's the way it starts out. And by the end of the class, they usually have come to a new idea. But the point that I was going to make is that I will say to them, what I I'd like to think I have done with my life is I have taken those things that I like about being female. Those things that I like about being male, incorporated them together. And the result is called a person, not male or female, a person. And then I watched their eyes roll. Right? That's a totally just, they just can't deal with that. That idea that they seem to believe that, oh, no, you're a male person or female person since when?



14:15

Right? And I think that the fact that we're shaking up that assumption, the fact that there's people listening here going on, geez, come on, I'm a die or I'm a girl. And that's that was some people don't go to bed at night knowing that. That's all we're saying. Well, that's the fact that we don't. And the fact that gender isn't questioned in this culture alone should make people curious.



14:39

What brings me to another question that's near and dear to my heart as a transgender rights activist here, I loved your chapter, which was called which outlaws and you talked about, you said, transsexuals presenting themselves but therapy in this culture are channeled through a system which labels them as having a disease, transsexuality for which that they therapy is to lie, hide or otherwise remain silent. Now it's ironic because I'm interviewing a gender therapist tomorrow. And indeed, as part of his therapy to do precisely what you've said, as a transgender activist, though, it makes it impossible sometimes for me to draw 20 people together and say, here's what we need to do. Talk a little bit about why you think transsexuals are so afraid of one another.



15:25

I think, for two major reasons, I think this, this therapeutic lie, which, incidentally, since the publication of the book, I have run into some therapists who don't do that. And in the preface to the new edition, I'm saying that, that it's not a universal thing. I went a bit fanatic on that. I did. And I think that any transgendered person or anyone with issues of transgender should interview therapists and make sure that they're not recommending that we might what we're told is, we go into this therapy, and we say, I don't think I'm a guy, and we're told, Oh, then you're a woman. Right? And we're told that in order to be in this world healthy, we have to be women and never say we were men. Never say that we lived like I lived my first 34 years as a guy. What am I supposed to do with that? What kind of therapy is that to tell someone to negate 34 years of their life and pretend it never happened? I was told by peer groups, right? Counseling peer groups, to say things like, Well, when I was a little girl, I would blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I was never a little girl, Sarah, I was a little boy, I was a confused little boy. But I was trying valiantly to be little boy, because I figured that's what I had to try and appear like, otherwise I'd get stoned. You know, literally with Little Rock. But as an adult to tell someone to lie, that's our therapy. transsexuality is the only condition in the culture for which the therapy almost universally, is to lie, is to say, don't tell anyone you're transsexual, you're a woman now be very satisfied with that.



17:14

Really kind of a humorous story. But it's also a story which made me grow up. I was at a conference. And I was well hidden. I hadn't been out too very long. And I was still learning the ropes. And I made the mistake of telling someone that I had a daughter. And she looked me right in the eye and said, Oh, how long was your labor? And I thought, oh, and right, then I learned I can't do this. I just can't do this. If I'm going to have to face the world, I'm not going to lie about it. And so by having made that decision, it immediately separated me from 99% of the gender community. Yep. It's unfortunate. I tried to teach people how not to do that.



18:02

I'm sorry to interrupt. I think that's changing now. I think more and more transgendered people are getting the courage to speak up, are getting the courage to say, Yeah, I used to be a guy. Yeah, I used to be a girl. Big deal. Get over it. And, and I think what's what's good about it is that our first voices, your voice, you have a sense of humor, thank goodness, thank goodness. I mean, you know, like we could be these like, really, really horrible. You know, angry people. And I've got a lot of anger about that. But it's the human condition. I've got my cross, so to speak, and and I don't choose to see it as a cross, I choose to see it as a challenge. I choose to see it as well. How am I going to deal with this thing strapped to my back? Well, maybe I can kind of float in the water on my back and kick around for a bit. I mean, there's lots of things to do. And all of a sudden, it disappears. And I'm terribly free. As soon as I say this is who I am.



19:01

That's the best thing about it. I feel so liberated. Yep. You know, I, the thing about being a liar is you have to have a good memory. And I usually I can't remember what I had for breakfast usually. So I wasn't out out for that job at all.

usually. So I wasn't cut out for that job at all.



19:15

It's like pre Stonewall gays and lesbians who had tired all the time. That's where we are as a community. And we're just starting to come out with that. And I think gays and lesbians should look on us with kind of almost parently pride and go are good. We set the ground for this because gays and lesbians did. They came out against tremendous odds, and tremendous cultural oppression. And we're marching in that same path. And I think we owe a great debt to the gay and lesbian community for having shown us that it's okay to come out about who we are.



19:51

Well, that leads me right into the next question. That's perfect. And in the chapter that was titled other questions, you say, it's no sir prize that the steering committee for the 1993 was March on Washington. for lesbian, gay and bi rights, the largest ever civil rights march in the United States voted to exclude the word transgender from the title of the mark. Well, regular listeners to this show have heard me talk about transgender exclusion from the Stonewall marched in New York, in from our exclusion of the employment non discrimination act, which is currently in sitting in Congress right now. And are pointed out that both of these happened at the hands of lesbian and gay activists who are determined to achieve a really nasty thing called assimilation. If you were talking to listeners about your concepts of eliminate assimilation?



20:42

Sure, I think I think it's an inevitable, sadly inevitable road that many, many activists take that we struggle so hard, don't we to just find a resting place to just find a place where people will let us alone and get on with our lives, right. And when we find when we when, when we can't do that by lying when we can't do that by hiding. We can't do that behind closed doors when the police continually raid our bars. We raise our heads in protest, and we and we storm around and we would go Yeah, we are who we are. And this is what happened with lesbians and gays. And but there is still that search for arresting places, and they're they're still please just leave me alone. And let me love my lover, will you just leave me alone? Unfortunately, what happens in order to find that resting place? The battle isn't over until we name the real oppression. And the real oppression is a culture that does not like difference that says quite liberally, oh, we're all the same. Oh, you lesbians and gays are just like us. I see. You want to vote, you know, like Republicans? Oh, that's fine. You know? And, and I think too many people are too battle weary. And they go Yeah, yeah, we're just like, you were just like, you stop putting your cameras on on the drag queens, will you stop putting your cameras on the Butch dykes on the motorcycles we get? They're not like us, we're there. They're freaks. And those were the freaks on the edge of the lesbian and gay culture. Were the ones that they put the cameras on where the splendid ones wearing ostrich feathers. Or we're the ones who have cut off our whatever. And and that makes it hard for the people who've been working so hard to find a resting place? Well, I say there's no resting place until we get rid of the real oppression in this culture, which I think is us versus them, which I think is this whole tendency of power and greed. And let's face it, capitalism. It's it's this acquisitive nature that has been constantly pumped into our culture by advertising, by the nature of a capitalist structure that we have to overcome. And once that

happens, then we can start celebrating our differences, then we can start saying oh, you're a what you used to be. But until then, there, were always going to find freaks. And I think what lesbians and gays need to do as a culture is acknowledge a very huge, growing groundswell transgender movement. And welcome at his allies, because this recent Republican backlash that happened in the Senate and the House of Representatives, they're going to hit out at anybody and they're not going to make the difference between a transgendered person and a queer for No, you know, gay or lesbian person, they're not going to stop and ask, Oh, excuse me, we're out to persecute some people. Are you transgendered? Or are you lesbian and gay? They're gonna lump us all together, and we better join him. Now.



23:58

One of my favorite sayings that people have heard here on the show, is a quote from Benjamin Franklin to the effect that we are either all going to hang together, or we will surely all hang separately. And one of these days, we'll get that across. Kate Bornstein. That's all the time that we have for this particular segment. Thank you very much.



24:17

Thank you very much.



24:19

It takes a lifetime to become the best that we can be. We have not the time or the right to judge each other. It's one life and there's no return and no deposit one light so make sure you like what's in your terms of use.



24:41

Okay, ladies and gentlemen, we've we've begged, we've pleaded we've implored for funds. We've asked you repeatedly kindly to dial five to six KPFT and pledge your support to this kind of programming. And you bet you forced us to do this. Jim, would you would you lift that box up to the mic. Oh, sure, sure. Yep, that's right. Kittens, a whole box full of kittens. Now if you don't go to your phones and dial five to six KPFT we're just going to be forced to fire up the old chainsaw



25:24

and the results won't be pretty, that's for sure. Dark meat. Kittens flum Bay. So go to your phones and dial five to 6k PFT they're running out of time fast and save this whole litter of kittens from a fate Well, things could get very ugly and messy here in the studio.



26:28

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Well, all I can say is we really didn't do anything to any of the cats. That's that's a fact. We really didn't do anything to the cats. Although I have to say it was a temptation. Oh,



26:42

that's the same one I'm on. I see how that works. Yeah, it's a bill made me do it. Really? Actually, I think I'm on the the I completely lost my train of thought I lost my ticket on my train of thought,



27:00

Well, okay, if you want to save the rest of the kittens, the number is 5265738.



27:07

Me do it. Yeah. Oh, okay. Let's see. Yes. And out there pledge Central. I'm not sure what our total is. But I know it's well below what we should be getting. And hey, you know what this whole new to what's his name? Wanting to cut all the funding to the CPB and all this nifty stuff, where he made your dollars more than ever. And, hey, we you know, because like 80, something percent of our operating budget comes from you the public out there and Public Radio, remember it is your radio station. So support your radio station. As mean, you don't get, you know, a free voice, you know, is a pretty tough thing to get in this kind of commercialized society. Well,



28:01

I'll tell you what, we're coming toward the end of our segment here pretty soon. I'll tell you what, let's do we've been saying that you had to pledge \$90 on plastic in order to get the poster. Right. Let's I'll tell you what, let's make it a little easier. For \$50 on plastic, you will get all the other all the usual. All the usual perks. And Michelle I think has those. Plus, we'll get you the we'll get you the poster of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert. Okay, that's the full size movie poster. So for \$50 on plastic, you get what kind of presents do we give people winning lottery tickets here? What?



28:47

Well, no, but even better than that, for \$35 you can get out. You get a KPFT program god.



28:54

Okay, so for 50 bucks, you'll get the program guide, plus a full size poster of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, but that's \$50 on plastic. Okay, and as usually what do they get if they come up with 60 bucks?



29:09

For 60 you get a coffee mug or T shirt.



29:14

Yeah, and for 90 We we we do what we slay their kittens are



29:21

not only do we save to the kittens, but and if you're like me, and you can't decide between the coffee mug and the t shirt for \$90 you can have both. I mean just eliminate all that stress of trying to decide.



29:35

And for \$150 You get the KPFT watch.



29:41

Okay, I think people get the idea. You know I hate this begging you know what? Oh, yeah, I do. I hate it. It's just folks, we need the money and what can I tell you? I'd like to think I'd like to tell you that there's some other reason that we that we're out here begging for this money but the truth is we need the money? Hey, you know what I mean? I understand we have we need some repairs on the transmitter soon. I promise you those contractors aren't working for free.



30:10

No, you know,



30:12

I know you're tired of hearing hearing about us begging for money. I know we're tired of begging for money. So if somebody sends in 100 our pledge will shut up for the rest of the show no more by No, I'm



30:21

not gonna promise. Another 100



30:34



30:24

I'll shut up for the rest.



30:30

Let's talk about Kate Bornstein interview a little bit some of what she said in the in the first part of this interview, and we're gonna air the second part here and in a little bit, we're gonna have to do an abbreviated QM Z in here someplace to but what you, she thinks is the OJ Simpson trial, she's objecting skateboarding, like kittens were tasteless. I never claimed to have any taste or money. Kate Bornstein talked about the whole idea, the whole concept of gender in the first part of this interview, and she, she makes a real strong case that gender may have outlived its usefulness, the whole concept of gender. Anybody want to comment on that?



31:21

Yeah, I'd like to comment on this is something you had in school, I've been setting a lot of history and things like luck in the past, you know, back when we were all hunter gatherers, I mean, gender had a definite goal, a definite purpose. I mean, because Because men, men are generally stronger than women. And that, you know, women, I just take time off to raise children. And there were to have children. So there wasn't any time, you know, so the men had to do the hunting and that division of roles made sense. But now that the most of our most of our jobs are not, not based on pure physical strength. It just seems that gender roles are, make less and less sense. And not to mention that some women are very strong, and that they certainly should be allowed equal opportunity with the men and doing those jobs as well.



32:11

Let me read a passage out of her book. This comes from part of the book, it's called other questions. And here's what she says, gender is not safe. If I change my gender, I'm at risk of homicide, suicide, or a life devoid of half my possibilities. If I'm born with the body that gives mixed gender signals, I'm at risk of being butchered, fixed, mutilated, gender is not safe. Gender is not sane. It is not sane to call a rainbow, black and white. It is not safe to demand we fit into one or the other. Only. It is not saying that we classify people in order to oppress them as women, or to glorify them as men. Gender is not sane. And gender is not consensual. We are born, a doctor assigns a gender. It's documented by the state enforced by the legal profession, sanctified by the church, and it's bought and sold in the media. We, we have no say in our gender. We're not allowed to question it, play with it, work it out with our friends, lovers, or family. Gender is not consensual. Any comments on that?



33:44

I'd like to say one thing about gender. And that is, you know, one thing we haven't discussed yet tonight. And that is the fun that can be had in exploring gender roles, and gender behaviors. One thing that you know, and try a whole lot is with the library, whether male or female to play around with my gender roles, whether I'm playing with the male roles, or the female. A lot of times, you know, I get kind of, we get so caught into the serious side of all this,

we forget that there's time to have fun with it and the play. And it's like it can be so cool just to kind of do things in play and fun and light hearted. And I think one of the things that's so cool is to be able to, to dress up in a very mixed sort of way and then reverse roles and just play around with the roles. Like sometimes I'll take a very submissive role as a male in a very dominant role is a female and vice versa. So, you know, it's something that can just be played with and that.



35:11

But how do we deal with this in everyday life? Let me here's here's my reason for asking this. I've mentioned this before, one of the things that I have one of the very first things that I noticed, when I made my transition from male to female, was a loss of status. Were once before my opinion mattered if I was in a conference, and I had an opinion, my opinion mattered. Now, as a female, that people will look at me and say, Oh, that's nice. And they will ask the male next to me what they think. So how do we deal with this issue of gender in a way that we had, how we deal with it in the real world?



35:56

And I think once again, when we can incorporate play into the real world, that can have a very tremendous impact on levels that no other arguments can have.



36:13

Wow, what do you mean, when we incorporate play? I mean, I'm talking about things like jobs. Yeah. I mean, I mean, I think Michelle understands perfectly when I was when I'm talking about as a male, I never would have thought about the idea that I was vulnerable, and never would have asked for someone to help me. walk me to my car. Now I understand that I'm at risk. Sarah, you got something you want to add here?



36:40

I need to say this, because I've heard you say the same thing. A couple of times. Yeah. Seminars and stuff like that. And me myself, you know, being a woman, you know, this is something that we deal with all the time. That's right. I mean, the thing about is you actually got to see the other side. And you and you talk about it, because it you know, it did affect you. But for people like me, and also I'm also Hispanic. So you know, we're talking double jeopardy here, or even triple because I am a lesbian. And the thing about is you lose status. But you know, I've never had the status. So it's like you're not only dealing with, you know, gay and bisexual, you're talking about human issues. And people need to stop about the special rights and privilege. We're talking about something that everybody is entitled to exactly every single person and the fact that you lost part of your status and they turned and looked at the man. I was never asked the question. Well, that's That's right. And I made I make the point because because I've heard people say, Oh, women are just doing nothing but Bichon when they talk about, they want equal rights, and they don't understand what women are talking about. When when women say we want equal rights they have

