

**JIMMY CARPER:** Well, this is Jimmy and while I've got control of the helm, why don't we do a couple of fun things? Hey, remember John Waters' films? Remember Divine? Remember *Pink Flamingos*? Remember Edie Massey, Divine's mom in that movie? Well, listen to this.

And, and, and, and to introduce our guest, I've got a Bryan Ferry song that I really, really, really like, and I've played it before here, and we play Bryan Ferry because he's so cool. Who cares about his sexuality? But this is especially for Jean-Louis. It's kind of in the vein of what we're going to talk about. It's called *Rescue Me*.

**JEWEL GRAY:** OK, we're back. You're with *After Hours*, and my name is Jewel Gray. We're here with Jim Carper doing the *After Hours* program tonight, and our special guest tonight is Jean-Louis Armand. Is that it? Armand?

**JEAN-LOUIS** That's correct. Some people call me Jean.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Jean, yes. I've seen you write that, just Jean.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Yes.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** I prefer the sound of your natural name. Jean-Louis. I like that.

**JEAN-LOUIS** I like the name Jean-Louis. A lot of people can say it, but sometimes they can't.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** So you're Cajun?

**JEAN-LOUIS** No.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** No?

**JEAN-LOUIS** I was born in France.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Really?

**JEAN-LOUIS** I was 11 years old when I came here with my parents.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** I just assumed you were from New Orleans.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Everybody does.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Yeah, everybody with a French name in Houston had to come from New Orleans. Yeah. So you were born in France? Well, that's cool.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Yes, I was.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** And I misspoke earlier when I told you what Jean-Louis was going to be talking about. We had talked about doing several things, and what we'll be talking about tonight is coming out in self-esteem. I think that is as important as couple battering, and we will have Jean-Louis back to talk about couple battering and gay couples at another day, but tonight let's talk a little bit about self esteem. And when we were talking outside, we were trying to figure out what would be the best way to take this, and I think the first question should be what is self-esteem?

**JEAN-LOUIS** Well, there are many definitions for it. I like a simple one is really self-esteem is feeling good about oneself. And

**ARMAND:** this occurs when one lives authentically, which means that the inner self and the outer self are not really at odds with each other. And this is where coming out plays a major role. It not only an answer enhances self-esteem but it is intrinsic to one's self-esteem.

**JEWEL GRAY:** What does that mean on a daily basis? What does that mean to the guy out there who--

**JEAN-LOUIS** It means really not being defined by others but defining our own selves as gay people. There's a lot of shame and

**ARMAND:** self-hatred in our community, and this is perhaps the greatest obstacle to love in our community. If we have internalized homophobia and we don't like ourselves, we can't have healthy relationships with each other.

And one sees a lot of what I call the boys in the band syndrome, where self-hatred is expressed by verbal viciousness and real cruelty with each other. We have to build a positive self image to relate to each other with love and celebrate our oneness with each other.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Now, you can talk about self-esteem because you are a therapist. You have been a therapist over at the Montrose Counseling Center, where we met for five years.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Nearly five years.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Nearly five years, and you just decided to open your own practice.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Yes. With much fear and trembling, I may add.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Yeah, it always is a kind of a spooky situation a step away from a crowd or a group or a team and get out on your own. You were an MSW AC-- I mean ASW, right? Oh, not ASW.

**JEAN-LOUIS** ACP.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** ACP, OK.

**JEAN-LOUIS** MSW means I have a degree of a master's in social work degree, and ACP involves five years supervision under

**ARMAND:** someone who is also-- and, by the way, ACP means advanced clinical practitioner, and also means taking a very grueling four hours test which one approach was a much trepidation.

**JEWEL GRAY:** It amazes me those tests. The test for C-DAC, the certified-- I was just amazed. It's so thorough, and they really dig more for-- and just to give an insight on this, I noticed on those tests they ask more about how you assimilate that knowledge than they do about exact book memorizing.

**JEAN-LOUIS** That's correct.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Which makes the test even that much harder, and I think it was much harder to-- I think they're much harder to grade because everybody assimilates knowledge in a different way. And it makes every test very individual.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Well, really, and you'll almost have to second guess how they would want you to answer the question, not how

**ARMAND:** you would answer the question, and that makes it difficult.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Yeah, which is a really scary thing. Well, yeah, self-esteem, where does self-esteem come from? I was thinking here while you were talking, self-esteem is not something you wake up one morning and say I got or I don't got suddenly. It's an acquired, accumulated thing.

**JEAN-LOUIS** I think it goes along with our own coming out process, which is a process and therefore it takes time. It is not

**ARMAND:** easy, because as gay people from the moment of our earliest childhood, we have been brainwashed into feeling we're not good enough, that our love is either immoral, illegal, or unnatural, and this makes for a very distorted self image. I've heard it phrased that being gay is like being like a Jewish child raised in an antisemitic family, where your parents-- and they don't know you're Jewish, where your parents become your first antagonist and oppressors.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Just by saying something like-- seeing something on TV and your dad saying, oh, look at that fag.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Oh, sure.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** It starts being a part of that oppression.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Right, and there's a sense of isolation. You're the only one that feels that likes his own sex and so forth, and you

**ARMAND:** start mistrusting your feelings. You start saying, well, how could I be right and the whole world be wrong?

Because you think you're the only one on the block that has these feelings. And, well, from my own experience, there were a lot of-- there was a lot of rejection by my peers. I couldn't throw a ball. I always threw a ball, quote, "like a girl," unquote.

**JEWEL GRAY:** I knew a lot of girls who threw a ball like a girl.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Well, sometimes they picked girls over me in the team and that was kind of depressing, but that made up later

**ARMAND:** for my feeling a sense that my peers will reject me. Even to this day there's a sense of feeling rejected. And also, not keeping a secret about being gay from earliest childhood, feeling like a phony, and always second guessing people. How would they feel if they knew I was gay?

Always feeling like we had to justify our existence. And after a while, we wonder how truthful we are to ourselves, to others, and this carries into our relationships also. And it's not easy. And eventually we need to define ourselves.

**JEWEL GRAY:** OK, I know this is going to be pretty simplistic, but let's go back and we start with a child who's born. Where does self-esteem start? How soon does it start?

**JEAN-LOUIS** I would say from the very earliest moment. Even the very choices about blue and pink for a boy and a girl immediately brainwashes a child.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Start dictating to you.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Oh, dictating, yes, the parents. For instance, they will allow a boy to get away with a lot more than they will sometimes with a girl. They want her to be very proper and so forth.

**JEWEL GRAY:** So that says to the girl, you are not as valuable to us as he is.

**JEAN-LOUIS** That's right.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** And even though it's not something that they say literally to you, you feel that internalized, and that's where you begin to work on that negative self-esteem.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Right, and as a gay male, I can speak to something else here. Sometimes we see in our fathers a certain disappointment. We're not going to play with that football he put in our crib. And sometimes we take refuge with our mothers because they may sense that something is different about us, and from the earliest moment, not that we like to do cooking and help and all that, but they seem to be a lot less dangerous.

And we see that look of disappointment. Myself, I felt it in my father, and it took the longest time to be reconciled to him. It's sort of a loss of expectations for both, because he was not the father I wanted him to be also. And that's kind of scary.

**JEWEL GRAY:** So what kind of things does it take to build self-esteem? Say we've talked about starting at a very early age and that parents have a hand in dictating the direction our esteem will go. And so you're starting school. What does self-esteem look like and what happens when you start school and you happen to be-- and you know-- I mean, I can recall as far back as second grade, I mean, and I know further back, but I can distinctly recall thoughts in my head as far back as second grade-- and the reason I know it was second grade is because I can relate to what was going on around me, I know it was second grade-- about being different and the feelings I had for other children in my classrooms.

I recognized even as soon as second grade that I felt differently about Mary than I did about Billy, and that I had more than a normal crush on Mrs. Mills, who was my second grade teacher, that it was more than a crush, and I recognized then. And I remember, whether it was a conscious linear thought or not, I remember knowing that I felt different than everybody else.

**JEAN-LOUIS** This was the same with me. And I do a lot of intakes at the Montrose Counseling Center, and one of the questions is, how early did you realize your orientation? And by far, I would say 85%, I would say, as long as I can remember or from earliest childhood. In my own experience also, I remember my cousins coming down through the Nazi lines in Southern France, and they were my male cousins, 18, 19, and 20, and they put me on that lap, and I used to look at them like they were gods. And I used to feel such thrill.

And all my-- I had some male students or male friends that I would feel crushes on. It was really interesting that it started so early, and way before my puberty. And this a lot of-- this is something that straight people don't understand. They think that our gay feelings are purely based on sex, and I really don't believe that.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Well, I was having gay feelings long before I knew that sex existed.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Exactly.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Long before. I mean, I guess the first time I became conscious that someday I would have sex was somewhere around the fifth grade, that I would have sex, and that's when it really started being a major mind. There was something I was dealing with that I didn't understand. It began to be a conscious thing. I knew that there was something I was going to have to deal with because I didn't fit into what was considered normal then, and I was dealing with that, and I became aware that someday I would have sex, and I had to work this out sometime before that.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Oh, interesting. With me also, I felt the same way, and sometimes sadly enough our peers are the ones that

**ARMAND:** detect it before we want to admit it. I was the French faggot, of course, for the longest time, and I was wondering what that was all about. I didn't even know what the word faggot meant. And eventually I started recognizing it, but then came the sad process of trying to deny it. I mean, even when I was 21, I said, maybe next year my puberty will come and I will start liking women and--

**JEWEL GRAY:** The phase will go away.

**JEAN-LOUIS** The phase, yes, that's right. And I even got married for five years just to try to disprove I was gay. Just to show

**ARMAND:** you how my own internalized homophobia existed.

**JEWEL GRAY:** So say we're back there at that fifth grade level, sixth grade, still in elementary school basically. I remember my self-esteem, I took some major shots at that age, where someone became aware of my direction and made life uncomfortable for me even in fifth grade. I was too tomboyish. That threatened something, and I was looked down upon, pointed down upon, and pointed out and made to feel ostracized.

Not only was I ostracized by myself that I had done for myself because I knew there was something different about me, then on top of that, I was ostracized by people outside of the situation who had determined that was what was going on in my life and tried to separate me from the normal little boys and girls.

**JEAN-LOUIS** That's right. You see, Jewel, the sad part is sadly enough we don't have any role models. We don't have anyone to take refuge with, especially not our parents, because they would be the first ones either to tell us to leave the house or to go to a psychiatrist, someone who would try to say that--

**JEWEL GRAY:** And that's what happened to me. They wanted me to seek therapy. First it was the school counselor, and then the school counselor wanted me to go further. And it took a lot of stress. It was a very stressful time for me. And if I hadn't, I think, been as strong as I naturally was, it could have really devastated the rest of my life.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Definitely.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Fortunately it only messed up that period of my life and I got over it and went on. But as far as self-esteem, I remember thinking that I felt kind of like-- I felt kind of like maybe how Robinson Crusoe felt when he realized he wasn't on the island alone, but he was alone, that everybody else was native and he was alone, that he couldn't communicate with these people, he couldn't share with these people, he couldn't live with these people. He could only bump into and watch from afar what was going on in their lives, and that's how I felt about the world around me.

And I remember being concerned about my future at that time, because I felt like I had been thrown off onto this island, where I was not able to or allowed to connect with other people.

**JEAN-LOUIS** This is where self-hatred comes from.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Exactly. That's what I wonder.

**JEAN-LOUIS** We internalize all this anger, and later it has to come out. And we really need to deal with each other in a

**ARMAND:** positive, loving way, because, after all, we are all wounded. What you're saying is exactly what happened to me also. We're wounded people and we need to be healing towards each other. Instead of becoming wounded wouders, to become wounded healers with each other.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Well, what do you do if you're listening to the radio right now and you're, oh, say, 15 years old and you've gone through these things that we're talking about now and you feel pretty much like-- not that you would do it, but the thought of suicide has crossed your mind because you feel like you can't fit in somewhere. What do you do if you're that 15-year-old sitting out there?

**JEAN-LOUIS** Well, being 15 is very difficult because you're dependent financially and in other ways upon adults, and there's

**ARMAND:** other contingents there. But I would say really get in touch with that part of you that loves life. People who want to commit suicide, they really want to do away with a certain part of themselves that they don't like, and this is why getting in touch with history books about gay history, gay heroes, positive role models, and all that is very important.

Trying to find help with parents and friends of gays, with organizations like Hippy, like Hatch, that will be supportive of one's gay feelings. It means trying not to be defined by others. At that age, it's very easy. Trying to see what part of you you enjoy and to celebrate life.

It's not easy at 15. I wish you'd ask me for someone much older, because at that point, I would say it all boils down to loving yourself. And loving yourself means never, never to criticize yourself. That sounds kind of lacking in humility, but when you criticize yourself, what you're doing is focusing on negative factors about yourself or that you assume about yourself. And whatever you focus on enlarges.

It was like me when I was learning to ride a bicycle when I was very, very young. I was wobbling, and I was saying, there's a hole, there's a hole, there's a hole, and I headed right into it because I could see no other options. So when you criticize yourself, you're focusing on negative factors, and anything you focus on enlarges. So the name of the game is to focus on your positive factors, trying to hear others, what they say.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Tony Robbins says, there are no failures, only results, and that you learn from these results either to do them again or not to do them again, and that's kind of how I look at things. I don't make failures, I don't fall on my knees, I learn a new lesson and I move on. I file it where I file other things. History lessons, math lessons, and the winning and losing that went with that. But no failures, only results, and then you take the results and apply them as they're necessary.

Well, you said that you'd rather me ask that for someone older. So we're talking about 21 now. And you're out on your own, you've got a job, and you don't feel good about yourself. What do you do?

**JEAN-LOUIS** Well, again, I said--

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** How do you recognize-- how does someone who has not been aware of that that's what's going on inside them, their own self homophobia, their own low self-esteem, how do you recognize that first and then what do you do about it?

**JEAN-LOUIS** I think one needs to monitor one's self thoughts. Whenever you say, gee, I'm not good enough, or I'll probably fail

**ARMAND:** this, or when you start giving yourself a lot of putdowns. And when things are not working out in your life, usually your negative thoughts lead to negative patterns, which eventually show up in your life. And eventually something tells you something is going wrong and something is not happening for you, and it's time to take stock of all these negative inputs that you've been putting into your system and to process them.

And especially for gay people, I really think that psychotherapy, maybe not individual but in groups, where you can have a psychotherapeutic encounter at each other, where we can talk with each other. We do so much cruising and a lot of stuff in the bars and running around, we don't have time to share with each other our experience. Not only to accept ourselves as gay people, but I really feel that by doing that, we're going to get to what our story is, to who we are.

Maybe who we are and what our story and what we can contribute to the world will make major changes to the world. That we have a positive something to contribute, not just being accepted. We need to go beyond that, to work towards a gay spirituality, to work toward what being gay is all about. And I really feel that that is done through dialogue, to being in groups, through discussion, and that's why I'm very much in favor--

**JEWEL GRAY:** I agree about the groups. I agree very much about the groups. Not only this, but it develops a bond with other gay people, that you can bond. You can see healthy relationships between other gay people and yourself. And until you deal with that and open yourself up to the greater community, you will always be alone.

**JEAN-LOUIS** That's right. And you find a lot of your feelings that you thought was so distorted are normalized by others having had the same experience. The same experience of rejection, the same experience of being shamed, of being--

**JEWEL GRAY:** So then you begin to realize that this is a cultural problem, not your problem.

**JEAN-LOUIS** That's right. It's not about us being crazy. It's about us having tried to adapt to a crazy situation.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Exactly. Which does a lot of relief. I know it was-- when I finally came to that conclusion when I was in my 20s, early 20s, it was such a relief to realize that this was not my problem. It was how they perceived me that was the problem, not how I perceived them, and that I couldn't change how they perceived me. I could only live honestly with myself.

**JEAN-LOUIS** I find it very upsetting that for the most part, straight people try to define us, and they try to say who we are, that we choose to be or that we're not born that way and so forth. And I really feel-- like, for instance, as a white person, I would never try to define what the Black experience is. As a male, I would never define what the female or feminist experience is. I may sympathize with them, but I would never define it. And yet, straight people have the gall to say, oh, this is what being gay is about. And that to me is so-- I find it really violating boundaries and really is awful.

**JEWEL GRAY:** So you wake up one morning and you're feeling good about yourself, and how do you maintain that? I mean, we talked about how to get out of bad self-esteem. How do you maintain a good self-esteem by treating yourself right?

**JEAN-LOUIS** Well, being patient with yourself is one of them. You're not over here, you're not over there. In this life, you're at this moment. Maybe there's a lesson for you to learn in this life, and at this moment this is where you are. To compare yourself to others is a losing game. When you do that, you stand still.

It means being good to your body, nurturing it in a good way. Being good to your mind, reading good things, looking at nice things. Your mind is like a pond. If you watch these horror movies and things like that, eventually it's going to be like a computer incorporating all of these things. I have nothing against these scary things, but still it means giving it what sort of things are good, lovely, truthful. Good things that are good for the mind.

And also, not to forget your spirit. I think a lot of us have been scarred by traditional religions. They have gone so far in distorting us, in creating such distortions in us that maybe there's a time to leave them for a while and to take a fresh breath of air, but eventually one needs to get in touch with one's own spirituality. What is it? To try to separate the wheat from the chaff. Maybe not throw the baby out with the bathwater of some traditional religions, but get in touch with what our spirituality is and to discuss it with others, to form groups with other gay people. I think that's very important.

**JEWEL GRAY:** I have a call on line 9. I think it's Tom. Is this our Tom? Oh, good. I'm glad to hear from you, Tom. He wants to talk about reaching out to teenagers before 21, because we have a lot of-- we acknowledge and talk to directly a lot of people who are listening to our show who are under 21, and Tom especially connects with a lot of them.

**TOM:** Yeah, I'm not a [? chicken fox ?]. But as you know, I do have deep feelings for each member of our community. I don't I don't care what age they are. And suicide among our teenagers is a national disaster, among our gay teenagers, and we need to reach out long before they're 21 years old.

We need to encourage them to get into organizations like Hatch and to contact with people their own age who have come out of the closet and who are members of these organizations, so we need to support these organizations. But long before they get into the bar scene. The bar scene is so empty.

To me, the bar scene-- I used to be in the bar scene, and one day I just realized it was just an empty scene. There's nothing there. There's much more to the gay community than Pacific and Grant.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Well, what exactly are you looking for, Tom?

**TOM:** No, we just need to reach out to our teenagers. You mentioned 15, and you said something about the-- I had wish you had asked of a little older age. No, we need to reach out to that young gay person that's out there too, that listens to this program, many of them, and let them know that they are not alone, that homosexuality has been around since time was begun, and they were born that way and they have nothing to be ashamed of.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Right.

**TOM:** But many of us went through long, long periods. I didn't come out of the closet until 1976, and, lord, that's only been almost 20 years ago. And I'm 51 years old, so I went through many years of wondering and in the closet and ashamed and so forth, and now that's no longer true, because now-- and there are good books out there.

I have a whole library that I'm planning on donating of positive gay material and historical records and historical facts, not records themselves, but historical facts about gay people. And we need to encourage our young. I mean, our teenagers long before they're 21 years old to study this and to read.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Our problem here is dealing with legal age and how we are still considered a criminal--

**TOM:** Yeah.

**JEWEL GRAY:** And then connecting with the younger age people and the corruption of minors and that legal bull that goes on in there. How do we connect to these--

**TOM:** Did you know that 97% of child molestation is done by the breeders? And for some reason or other, we seem to be afraid to stand up to the religious right when they start talking about this kind of garbage, that we're out recruiting and so forth, which is a bunch of crap. And we need to stand up and call them for what they are, nothing but liars and hypocrites.

But we seem to be afraid that if we say something to somebody who says that they're a man of God, then that's automatically going to condemn us to the hell. Hey, screw it. I don't really care.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Tom, when I said, I wish you'd asked for someone older, I didn't mean not to overlook-- I didn't mean to overlook the teenagers. It's just that I don't have teenage clients, and I felt to speak for their experience, about their experience, was not my expertise. I agree entirely with you.

**TOM:** Well, it's not mine either, brother.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Role models and all that. And part of it is our oppression. Up till now, to have worked with youngsters and **ARMAND:** teenagers would have been considered, like Jewel mentioned, that we were trying to--

**JEWEL GRAY:** Recruit.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Recruit and become immoral with them.

**ARMAND:**

**TOM:** Well, we know that that's--

**JEAN-LOUIS** And so it's just so new that I don't have any expertise in it. And what you say is true.

**ARMAND:**

**JEWEL GRAY:** Tom--

**TOM:** That only maybe 3% of homosexuals are pedophiles, whereas 97% of the breeders are.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Tom.

**TOM:** Yes?

**JEWEL GRAY:** We're going to talk about this. I really appreciate you calling, and--

**TOM:** Love you.

**JEWEL GRAY:** OK, we'll talk to you later.

**TOM:** And Jewel, I'm sorry about your cat. I really am.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Thanks, Tom.

**TOM:** I understand.

**JEWEL GRAY:** That means a lot, thanks.

**TOM:** We love you.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Love you too.

**TOM:** Bye-bye.

**JEWEL GRAY:** Bye-bye. OK, we'll just elaborate a little bit about that point about the underage and the recruiting and how difficult it is for us as older gay and lesbian people to reach out to the young people because of the legal problems.

**JEAN-LOUIS** It was tragic that we would see our youth committing suicide, being kicked out of homes, being sent to

**ARMAND:** psychiatrists who did not understand what was going on, and then suicide occurring, and helplessly looking on because any attempts at helping would have been seen as you said as recruiting and so forth. And I'm so glad that groups like Hippy and Hatch do occur. I think positive role models. They have counselors, now there are groups I understand with them, that there are adults working with them as groups, and I really think it's positive role models and history.

**JEWEL GRAY:** I think we try to be that here, and we try to offer a wide range of what goes on in the gay world, our gay community. From Scott's show, which is very bar trashy and the way they are, to Michael's show, who's very political, to Diane, who's very into feminism and women issues, and to my show, which I try to deal with the older people in our community. I try to connect with-- these people do a lot of stuff about younger things, and I try to connect with the more stoic things in our community.

And I think that we try to be role models. Not a particular role model, but to show people that we're very diverse people and that you can pick a model at any part of this spectrum of gay diversity. From Scott, who's very barry over there at Heaven, and to Michael, who's very political. So that you can have a wide range of people if you don't-- I mean, because a role model has to be somebody that you can identify with. And if I'm sitting on the radio and somebody can't identify, it doesn't matter what kind of person I am, I can't be a role model.

So I think that the radio show, gay and lesbian voices, any time people do public national things. Joanne Llewellyn with her books is a big role model for me. I really adore Joanne. And some of the musicians are role models for me, some of the people who've been around a long time, like Christian.

**JEAN-LOUIS** Also, the more people can--

**ARMAND:**