

- OK, we do have a few phone calls. So we're going to try to take here, if I can remember how to do this. OK, John, you're on the air. Here we go. John?

- Yes?

- You're on the air.

- Yes, I was just calling to say I'm glad that people are starting to stand up for gay rights and really telling-- letting people know that they're gay and not hiding anymore. Because sometimes I feel kind of-- gay, you faggot, fucking fag. [LAUGHS]

- OK, Matt, you're on the air.

- (AMUSED) Yeah. Yeah, sounds like someday he might come out.

- Yeah, could be.

- Yeah. What I wanted to ask is it seems like in the gay community that when people do come out that because the only message they ever get is the negative messages is that when they come out, they embrace those stereotypes. And you never hear the gay community promoting monogamy in long-term, committed relationships.

And it seems like that's the safest form of safe sex there is is being in a committed, long-term relationship. And you never hear that message that that's possible, that that's something that gay people can look forward to. I was wondering if that's a topic that you all address in your group?

- This would be-- one of the things is talking about all the different aspects of the gay lifestyle, and monogamy, of course, would be one of those. Because that's the ideal of any relationship is to have a one-on-one relationship from now to whenever.

That is one of the things we see in the gay community so many times is that people fall in lust rather than love, and those relationships don't last but over a few weeks period, and then you go on to the next person. And that's not the image we're trying to put across. We're trying to say, hey, being gay is very healthy and it's very normal, and you can have a relationship just like a heterosexual couple can.

- OK, that's all I want to know.

- OK, thanks for calling, Matt.

- Sure. Thanks.

- John, you're on the air.

- Yes.

- Hello, John.

- Hi.

- Hi, John.

- I have a actually I have quite a few questions for you I really, really do like what I hear and everything but the only thing is I'm a little disappointed that it's like just now getting started because it seems like now that I'm almost out of high school and I've already kind of gone through all this, it seems like it's just been so long and so lonely out there. But I am happy that it is starting up and everything. My first question is, how soon can I get active?

- What you can do, John, is you can call the phone number that we gave. And we'll--

- And that number is 523-7242.

- Uh huh.

- Right.

- And call it and just leave a message, your phone number, name. And John or I will call you back either tomorrow or Monday and give you more information and then let you know when the next meeting will be as soon as we get that set up and everything.

- OK. How often are y'all planning to be active? I mean, I know right now, you're just starting off, but how often are y'all like planning to get together?

- Oh, we'll be meeting on a weekly basis. Maybe-- some of the plans are to meet as much as two to three times a week, different type of activities, meetings, social activities, stuff like that.

- OK. I think that's good because it does-- like y'all are saying, it is hard for a teen out there to have nothing to do because no one out there is really like understanding. And I just-- I think that's really, really neat. But I heard some of the things that you all want to do. Is that really like the only-- listen, I mean, how easy will it be for us to input our ideas?

- The organization will be run by the young adults. The adults themselves, the facilitators will have input, of course, as far as arranging and assisting any way they can as far as expertise.

But as far as if you need special permits for a march, or if you need a special permit for an activity, then the youth of the organization will go to the city hall and arrange for those permits themselves in order for them to get the experience of how to go about doing these things so that when they get involved in the gay political caucus or other activities or organizations, they will know how to go ahead and do those type of activities.

The other thing too is that SMYAL is going to be-- like I said, there's going to be a youth organization, and so they in turn will run the organization. It will not be run by adults or people over 22.

- OK. Now, you said something about splitting it up into gender and age.

- It depends on the activity. It depends on the topic as far as what-- if a peer group wants to talk about different subjects, and it may not be a subject that is interest to the lesbians in the group or the bisexuals, then you'll want to do it by gender. Or if it's a subject that only 16 or 17-year-olds are interested in, then you may want to-- that subject may be limited to that age group rather than to the 19 and 20 and 22-year-olds.

No reflection on The Twit or in the publication because it does a very good activity in the community. But I've had so many people come to me and say, that's how I found about the gay community is I picked up The Twit. Well, The Twit is a bar entertainment guide.

And it doesn't talk about the heartaches and the pains that you as a teenager go through trying to come out and trying to find other people other than through the bars. And so this is an alternative to the bar scene is a social activity where you can get to know people your own age and come out the right way in a safe environment.

- Right. OK, now this is kind of a really important question. Now, y'all are talking about putting publications in different school newspapers. Do you really think that's a good idea? Because it seems like the more that it's talked about in the schools, the more it becomes embarrassing for one to-- because if everybody picks up the newspaper in the school and they're like, oh, my gosh, this organization. Do you actually think you will reach more teenagers or turn more teenagers away that way?

- I think we'll reach them. They've done-- it's been very, very successful in Austin in doing that in Outreach Austin, Out Youth Austin. In fact, I think DC tried to run some ads, and they were turned down, but they got more publicity out of-- from the media when the schools turned the ads down than they did when they tried to run them in the school paper.

But I talked to the executive director in Austin, and she said they've been very successful in getting the information into the high school papers, in the ads. And when they started running the ads, people attending the groups at the YWCA there in Austin almost doubled. They now-- on any average Saturday, they have 75 to 100 people come to the meetings.

- Mm. Where are y'all planning on starting to meet? Do you know yet?

- Not yet. Once the foundation votes on putting this as a project of the foundation, then we'll approach some organizations for meeting space. But it will be at a regular site, on a regular basis.

- And as soon as we have that information, we'll make sure that you get it.

- Right. And also the Gay Lesbian hotline. And we'll be doing news releases in the publications here in Houston.

- Right. And the number for the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard is 529-3211. The number for SMYAL again is 523-7242. And we'd like to thank you for calling.

- OK, thanks, y'all.

- All right.

- Bye.

- Thank you.

- We'll take one more phone call. Brian, you're on the air.

- Hello?

- Yes.

- Yes, I was just calling about that guy who said that gay is not normal.

- Uh huh.

- Or he said it was normal. I'm sorry. I agree perfectly. I think gay is-- oh, excuse me-- normal.

- OK.

- I don't live in the Montrose area. I wish I did, because I would be gay!

- OK. Well, OK, so much for callers today. So anyway, again, we've been talking with Ron Sparks and John Hernandez with SMYAL. And tell us what SMYAL is one more time, John.

- OK, it's Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League of Houston.

- And I love that little A. It's a little pink triangle.

- Yeah.

- It's just-- it's really neat. The number for SMYAL here in Houston is 523-7242. It is answered 24 hours a day by a wonderful machine, sometimes by a human being. I have had it answered by a human being on occasion.

- [INAUDIBLE], of course.

- So be sure and leave your name and number. And they will return your call, and they will be discreet when they do that, if you'd like some more information on that. Also, the number for the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard in Houston is 529-3211. John, Ron, we'd like to thank you for being with us this evening. And--

- Thank you.

- --I know some of our listeners probably have some more questions. And if you'd be willing to stick around the studio for a little while longer, maybe you can talk to them on the phone.

- OK.

- OK?

- Thank you.

- Thank you.

- Thank you. And we're going to listen to a little bit more music here. And we've got *this Way Out* coming up at 1:30. You are listening to "After Hours" here on KPFT 90.1 FM Houston.

And you're listening to KPFT 90.1 FM Houston. This is "After Hours," a continuing tradition here on KPFT. And that was Erasure, from their *Wild!* album. And the song was *Star*. And Jewel's back here in the control room with me.

And talking to John, I guess, brought back a lot of memories for me about what it was like to be a teenager and be different and not really know who and what I was. Because I was almost-- goodness, I guess I was sleeping with men when I was 15, but I didn't really come out until I was 25. So it was a long time going from, I'm not one of those people, to knowing that, yeah, I'm one of those people, but those people aren't what everybody says they are.

- I started different. My mother outed me at 17.

- [LAUGHS]

- I thought I was going to tell her some news. And she told me, so what else is new?

- Yeah, well.

- It was a different kind of story. I've heard lots of people talk about their stories. And I discovered about 15 with an older woman, which was really lucky for me because she already had a lot of experience. And she shared a lot of that knowledge with me, so I was pretty lucky.

- It makes it nice to really have someone to talk to. I know when I first moved to Houston, I guess I'd been in Houston for about three years. And about a year and a half, I moved into a house in Missouri City. And it only took about a month or two to figure out that my next-door neighbors were some of those people, except at that point, I wasn't as scared of those people.

And it was-- we met, and we talked about this and that. We never talked really about their sexuality. And one day, I was over-- I finally got a tour of the house. And there was the kitchen, and the living room, and the dog's room, and then there was their room.

- Mhm.

- And it was like-- hmm. And I talked-- I asked them about that later, when I finally worked up the nerve myself to come out. And they were one of the first people that I came out to because I felt real comfortable coming out to them. And they said, well, we are. And I said, well, yeah, I've known that since the day I got a tour of your house and I was shown your bedroom. And it was like-- and he hadn't even realized he had said it. They were so comfortable with each other and evidently so comfortable with me that--

And even when we're not necessarily always that comfortable, it's interesting to me sometimes to talk to people that are still very much in the closet. And because it's they don't realize maybe that you're gay, and they're talking about the person they had the date with last night, and they never use a pronoun.

- Oh, yes.

- It's always the person, or my friend, or it's never "he this" or "she this," because then you'd know exactly what they were talking about. So people that are still in the closet have to be very careful all the time to do that. And I know back in my days when I was still very much in the closet, it was a major undertaking to do that all the time.

- The stress is immense. I remember.

- The stress is immense. But I don't think sometimes you realize how much stress is there till you finally come out. And it's like--

- A relief.

- --this major weight has just been lifted from your shoulders.

- Well, that's why I think I'm a fortunate person. I work in a gay situation. I can talk about my lover. I can talk about my lifestyle. And it's really very comfortable. And I worked a long time to get in this situation. I worked for a major oil company for many years where I used the non-gender pronoun when talking about what was going on in my life and was constantly on guard for my worrying about my job situation. It was hard.

And I know it's hard when you're young especially, because you haven't learned some of the nuances of talking to other people, the game that people play between each other trying to establish whether you are or whether you're not. Do you hang out here? Or do you see these kind of movies? Or getting clues from just conversation, and you don't know those clues yourself. So when they are either asked of you or in conversation, you don't recognize them because you haven't been there.

- That's true. I know-- well, I guess when I was about 19 or 20, I guess, my sister had just had a lesbian experience. And, of course, my parents were just devastated, because my sister was having difficulty dealing with it, and she talked to my parents. And they discussed it at length. And I walked in into the room. And out of the blue, there's this question, well, are you gay, too?

And it was like-- and at the time, I would have been willing to admit I was bisexual, but I didn't really-- I still thought, well, I was going to settle down and meet the perfect woman, and have 2.5 kids, and live happily ever after. And, of course, that is a fairy tale for me because I know today that I'm gay.

But the only answer at the time I could have given to that question was, no, because it would have just-- my parents were already at the end of their rope. And I think had I said yes, it would have been a real strange world for a while.

- Yeah. Yeah, it's pretty tough. My parents and I still don't talk about it, although they know and they're comfortable when I bring friends over or lovers to stay the night during holidays or something. They're OK with it, but we don't talk about it. It's not something we discuss. Therefore, we don't discuss much.

- Right.

- Because I put it to my mother many years ago, Mom, if we don't talk about my lifestyle, we cut out 99% of my life.

- That's right.

- We can talk about the weather and--

- Most everything [INAUDIBLE].

- --major disasters around the planet, and that's about it.

- Yeah, I work 8:00 to 5:00 for a nice company, but outside of that time, I'm involved with gay radio and I'm involved with gay this and gay that. And it's as-- different times, I feel like, well, I need to broaden my horizons a little bit and do some things that aren't so much directed to the gay community. But I find myself coming back to the gay and lesbian community because that's really where my needs are right now. It's, what can I do to help my community, and how can I return some of the things that have been done to help me along the way?

- It's difficult even as you get older to know what to say and who to say it to in your work situation, and even in your social situations sometimes, softball or something you play in the leagues, it's hard it's hard to know.

So I want to make people aware that we all have our difficult times when we're dealing with our gayness, but we find ways to get over that. We find tricks. We find clues. We find something that helps us learn how to communicate cleverly.

- That's true. Yeah, and it's-- of course, I'm out at my office, and I know you're, of course, working from [INAUDIBLE] I guess that [INAUDIBLE]. That is your job.

- Yes.

- And so you're definitely out at your job.

- Definitely.

- It's not a problem at all there. It's still somewhat of a problem around some people in my office. But my rule of thumb is if you talk about the people you date, then I can talk about the people that I date.

- Well, I think that's fair.

- Which means that most people at the office don't talk about the people they date around me because they don't want to hear what I've got to say, and they know I'm going to tell them if they--

- Well, that's their loss.

- --bring the subject up. But at the same time, I've got several people at the office that will come to me and ask questions about, you know, I've got a friend who has a friend that's dying of AIDS. And I don't know what to say to them. Help me out here.

So it is a two-way street. Everyone has needs for information that they can't come by on their own. And having an openly gay person in the office is sometimes a resource to some of them because it does give them an opportunity to ask questions. They may have a friend they think is gay and they want to talk to them about it, but they don't know how to approach it. And, of course, that's a real sticky one because it's like, well, I don't know, but--

- There's always a risk.

- Yeah.

- Unfortunately--

- There is.

- --that's one of the hardest parts about being gay is there's always a risk.

- But so this is our New Year's program here on KPFT. We're trying to bring in the New Year rush, the new year in a little early. *After Hours* is a continuing tradition here on KPFT. We have *This Way Out* coming up at 1:30.

And sometime in the second half of the show, we're going to be talking a little bit about New Year's and what it means to those of us here at the station, and what it means to us on *After Hours*, and what it means to us personally. So [INAUDIBLE] my tongue's not working. It must be time for coffee.

- Mhm.

- We're going to listen to a little more music from Jimmy Somerville. We heard *To Love Somebody* earlier. And this is *You Are My World* from the record *Bronski Beat and the Communards*.

- They say, they, that we are 10% of the population. That's what they say. Now, we don't stand out here, and if everybody would come out, it'd be more like 50!

[CROWD CHEERING]

Ain't I right?

[CROWD CHEERING]

Now, I say, why don't they represent us better? Why don't they, for example, sell products to us on television? I could sell a product on television. I could see it now. I'd be standing there in full leather drag, looking very butch.

I'd look into that camera and I'd sing, I drink tonic water and I'm proud. I'm part of the lesbian crowd! And everywhere I go, I hear women shouting loud, I'm a bull, like she's a bull, like she's a bull, like she's a bull! Like, wouldn't you like to be a bull dyke too?

[CROWD CHEERING]

- And that was [? Lynn ?] [? Lariat ?] from the March on Washington in 1987, '88. It's been a while. And it's time fo*This Way Out*.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- In a word in guardianship to Thompson, the court stated, Karen and Sharon are a family of affinity, which ought to be accorded respect.

- I've never known an activist organization that can shut down for three months and then start up again.

- We're the only magazine in the world that talks about sex in an open, candid and informed manner. It's really pathetic.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- Welcome to *This Way Out*, the international lesbian and gay radio magazine. I'm Greg Gordon.

- And I'm Lucia Chappelle. Court affirms affinity of the Thompson Kowalski family.

- San Francisco queers dissolve their nation.

- And more bright ideas about lesbian sex.

- All that and more, now that you've discovered*This Way Out*.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- I'm Cindy Friedman.

- And I'm Mark Saccomano.

- With News Wrap, a summary of some of the news in or affecting the lesbian and gay community for the week ending December 21, 1991. Karen Thompson's eight-year battle to win guardianship of her severely disabled lover, Sharon Kowalski, appears to have reached its final and happy conclusion. Chip Young reports from Saint Paul, Minnesota.

- Kowalski received brain damage in a car accident in Minnesota in 1983. She and Karen Thompson had previously exchanged rings and named each other in life insurance policies. A long, bitter legal battle ensued when Kowalski's parents cut off contact with Karen Thompson. Various courts have since found that Kowalski's condition deteriorated from inadequate care, but that she could still reliably express a desire to live with Thompson.

Despite uncontradicted medical testimony that Thompson was best able to care for Sharon, a trial court awarded guardianship to what it called a neutral third-party. Today's decision overturned that guardianship, saying the trial court abused its discretion.

In a word in guardianship to Thompson, the court used a new legal concept. The court stated, Karen and Sharon are a family of affinity, which ought to be accorded respect. Thompson's attorney, Sue Wilson, says she hopes the legal term "family of affinity" will be adopted in other states as a basis for making decisions about the lives of gays and lesbians who are handicapped.

Attorney Wilson said the previous legal decisions amounted to state-sanctioned termination of a lesbian relationship. Karen Thompson said she and Sharon were put through eight years of hell because of people's inability to deal with their relationship. She said she visited Kowalski in a nursing home, and despite short-term memory loss, Kowalski was, quote, "visibly moved by the decision."

Kowalski's parents previously have said they wouldn't visit Sharon if Thompson were awarded guardianship. Thompson said that she would never shut the door on the parents. In Saint Paul, I'm Chip Young.

- An appeals court in Illinois has denied child custody to a lesbian mother, simply because she shares a home with her lover. The court maintained that it was valid to consider an intimate cohabitation relationship in awarding child custody and that there was no discrimination involved since the same rule could apply equally to a heterosexual domestic partner.

John Hammell of the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois believes the ruling is discriminatory, since only heterosexuals have the option of legal marriage. He also pointed out that no evidence was presented that the lesbian household would be detrimental to the child. The appellate court did, however, strike down a ban on the lesbian partner being present during visitation. Neither party has made a decision whether to carry the appeal further.

- The Cracker Barrel restaurant chain, confronted this year by a long series of protests for firing lesbians and gays, has launched a counterattack. In late November, Cracker Barrel filed a lawsuit seeking damages from the organizers of protests in Georgia and Tennessee, including the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

The lawsuit further sought an injunction to prevent a demonstration Cracker Barrel believed would disrupt its annual stockholders meeting November 26. Some gay and lesbian stockholders claim they were denied entry to the meeting until it was almost over and are considering a counter suit on grounds of securities violations and malicious prosecution.

- In California, anti-discrimination protections vetoed by Governor Pete Wilson may appear as ballot initiatives next November. The Secretary of State has given permission for petitions to be circulated for two initiatives, which will need almost 400,000 signatures to go to the voters.

Both proposed initiatives provide protections and employment, but one provides housing protections as well. Both exempt nonprofit organizations. An initiative for universal health care, sponsored by the AIDS Health Care Foundation, was also approved for circulation.

- The need for anti-discrimination legislation in California is being underscored in Los Angeles. The strong city ordinance there banning discrimination in employment has been on the books for 12 years, but a Superior Court judge has declared it invalid.

Judge Diane Wayne dismissed an employment discrimination lawsuit brought by bisexual Jim Delaney against superior fast freight, ruling that protections for individuals can be legislated only by the state, not by cities. An appeal was filed December 6. And the appellate court's decision could affect at least eight other California cities.

- On the housing front, an appeals court ruled last month that a Los Angeles couple's religious convictions allowed them to violate state anti-discrimination law by refusing to rent an apartment to an unmarried heterosexual couple. Lesbian and gay rights groups have joined with fair housing, religious, feminist, and civil rights organizations to form a coalition to demand a rehearing.

- In Concord, California, the ballot initiative repealing lesbian and gay rights has survived a recount, winning by 42 votes out of a total of more than 23,000. The controversial Measure M is currently in legal limbo. It was blocked by a court injunction last month, pending judicial review. A similar initiative in Riverside, California was declared unconstitutional last month.

- US President George Bush was inaugurated in January 1989. He finally got around to meeting with one of his advisory commissions only last week. Matt Binder has the story.

- Bush got to know the members of his own AIDS commission, meeting with them for the first time since being elected president. In a one-hour meeting, Bush was told that the next decade would bring a sharp rise in the number of AIDS cases in the US. And he was told that some form of national healthcare is necessary to treat the many poor people with the disease.

Bush asked the commission what he and his wife Barbara could do to be helpful, but he made no commitments on healthcare reform or AIDS funding levels. Carisa Cunningham of the Washington DC-based AIDS Action Council says she's disappointed with the commission meeting.

- It was a little bit of a dog-and-pony show. I think that if the President had truly been interested in hearing what the commissioners had to say, he would have had a closed-door meeting where they were not put in the position of deciding whether to embarrass him in front of the media or not. And I don't think that an exchange of great substance happened at the meeting.

- Cunningham is glad that the President has finally met with his commission, but she says the way the meeting was held makes her believe that the President was more interested in publicizing his concern for AIDS than doing anything about it. In San Francisco, I'm Matt Binder.

- AIDS activism has spread to the Union of South Africa, with a new group of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, forming in Cape Town under the name ACT UP Western Province. The climate looks favorable for the new group, as the South African government has now repealed its only laws discriminating against those with HIV, removing HIV from the communicable disease list and removing HIV restrictions on immigration. Experts have predicted that one of every three South Africans may be infected by the year 2010.

- A gay activist in Lithuania reports a rise in gay-bashing incidents there and attributes it to the increased news coverage of AIDS. [INAUDIBLE] told the Swedish gay magazine *Kum Ut*, quote, "previously, the general public was not really aware that homosexuals existed. Now they have a negative attitude and blame gays for the whole problem of AIDS." End quote. A Lithuanian newspaper that had been publishing personal ads for gay men who could prove they were HIV-negative has been forced to drop the ads by government authorities who said homosexuality is illegal.

- The editor of the oldest gay and lesbian magazine in Greece, *Amphi*, has been jailed and fined for publishing indecent material. Irene Petropoulos was sentenced to five months in jail and fined \$300 for printing a notice asking heterosexual men to stop soliciting lesbians through the magazine. Petropoulos believes this is only the beginning of government action against gay and lesbian publications in Greece, even though there are no laws against homosexuality there. She is appealing the decision.

- Gay Community News, the Boston-based weekly founded in 1973, is struggling for its financial life. A plea for funds was the full cover story of the non-profit newspaper's first December edition, when \$4,000 was needed to make it through another week. The hopeful staff are looking for \$50,000 to ensure GCN's survival.

- Another cover story had happier implications. The major US business magazine *Fortune* headlined its December 16th edition *Gay in Corporate America*. The cover was illustrated with a photo of open-gay Jack Sansolo, who's President of the advertising giant Hill Holiday. The cover story features interviews with open and closeted gay and lesbian executives and the steps a handful of major US corporations have taken to make the workplace gay-friendly.

- Nicaragua has its first gay bar, the [INAUDIBLE], located near the National Baseball Stadium. The [INAUDIBLE] had been scheduled for a grand opening at a different location last month, until local authorities pulled the permit two days before. When residents of that Las Palmas neighborhood complained that their children would be corrupted, authorities used the nearness of President Violeta Chamorro's home to declare the area a security zone.

- The school board of Rochester, New York has voted to bar any recruiters for organizations with discriminatory policies from their high schools. The primary target, of course, is the US military, although school counselors will be required to provide enlistment information on request. According to a US Defense Department spokesperson, the school district's decision was the first of its kind in the country.

- There's a first two for US Black gays and lesbians, the nation's first Black gay and lesbian community center, which opened recently in Baltimore, Maryland. The center hopes to expand its initial social services to include housing for homeless youth, a hotline, and publications.

- And finally, there have always been rumors about some of America's best-known comic book superheroes. Superman never gave Lois Lane a second glance. And the dynamic duo, Batman and Robin, always drew knowing winks among gays. But now, we have this exclusive report from Keith Clark in San Francisco that's more than just a rumor.

- In mid-January, one of Marvel Comics' square-jawed, [INAUDIBLE] flexed superheros Northstar will be coming out of the super closet for the 80,000 readers of Marvel's *Alpha Flight*. It will mark the first time one of the super icons of the world of comics will be joining the rest of America's gay and lesbian population.

But for editors at Marvel, Northstar's coming out isn't news at all. According to Chris Cooper, a Marvel assistant editor, the character has been gay since his inception more than eight years ago. Before I was even working in comics, I read them, says Cooper.

And when I read the second issue of *Alpha Flight*, I immediately thought, hmm, that character is gay. Now he's just coming out. Well, good. After all these years, we finally know what the secret decoder rings were all about. This is Keith Clark, reporting for *This Way Out*.

- Thank you, Keith, for that marvelous story.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- That's *News Wrap* for the week ending December 21, 1991, compiled and written by Cindy Friedman.

- Follow the news in your area. An informed community is a strong community. For *This Way Out*, I'm Cindy Friedman.

- And I'm Mark Saccomano.

- San Francisco's Queer Nation recently decided to take a three-month hiatus from its street action activism. It's not the first Queer Nation group in the US to at least temporarily disband. We asked Keith Clark, a nationally-syndicated gay journalist based in San Francisco, whether or not he thought his city's Queer Nation would be resurrected in 1992.

[MUSIC - THE BEATLES, "HELLO, GOODBYE"]

- I've never known an activist organization that can shut down for three months and then start up again. Now, it may start up in some other form, or it may start up with a new kind of energy or who knows what.

- Why did the Queer Nation take this kind of action?

- I think Queer Nation has had a number of ideological problems. Like a lot of Queer Nations, there's a great deal of concern about process. There's a great deal of concern about inclusion. And it's easy for gay white males to say, we want to include everyone, we want to be inclusive, but we aren't used to actually practicing that.

It's easy to say it, but it's not so easy to do it in such a way that lesbians, that African-Americans, that Hispanics, Asian-Americans feel that they are, in fact, empowered by a group. And so there's been a lot of those kinds of issues which are not unique to San Francisco, by any means.

And the energy is also waning. Queer Nation would call for a demonstration, and not the number of people that you'd really expect would show up. And when that kind of energy starts to wane, you do probably have to step back and say, OK, what do we need to do differently?

I myself, personally in my experience, have never found a group that could successfully function on a consensus basis, except for the Quakers. And they're a religious group. They're not street activists. And so the insistence on consensus I think is just-- I mean, it's very idealistic and I admire that resurgence of idealism.

Am I glad that we have idealistic activists. But it seems, at the same time, almost guaranteed to undermine the ability to move. And that, of course, became a problem for Queer Nation, as it has for lots of other groups that have insisted on consensus.

[MUSIC - THE BEATLES, "HELLO, GOODBYE"]

- Commenting on the recent decision by San Francisco's Queer Nation to take a three-month hiatus was San Francisco-based and nationally-syndicated gay journalist Keith Clark. You've tuned into *This Way Out*, the international lesbian and gay radio magazine. With Lucia Chappelle, I'm Greg Gordon.

- This is Rosemary Welsch. Since its inception in 1984, *On Our Backs*, a magazine of lesbian erotica, and editor Susie Bright have been at the center of controversy. Bright, who writes as Susie Sexpert, *On Our Backs* sexual expert, has recently published a collection of her columns with Cleis Press, entitled *Susie Sexpert's Lesbian Sex World*. *On Our Backs* has been described even by some feminists as pornography because of its direct and diverse approach to sex and sexuality.

You've mentioned that in a lot of different-- I think the columns that you've done as far as lesbian sexuality, there really is an image of it.

- You're right. Lesbians have had a reputation for being either non-sexual or sensual, that is that airy, fairy, gossamer wing butterfly sexuality. It's not too off-base to say that lesbians have been pioneers in sexual discussion, safe-sex education, promoting sexual dialogue, accompanying our sexual activities. I think lots of times, men had a lot of interesting ideas and much more experience about sex, but their legacy of keeping it under wraps, being quiet about it while enjoying it prevents them from speaking out loud.

I think lesbians, in the sense that we're no longer trying to impress a man, get a man, and just that kind of consciousness that goes along with being a lesbian is very helpful in getting into sexual issues that an inexperienced heterosexual woman wouldn't have thought about before. I think we should start sharing our knowledge and our experience instead of hiding it in fear. I mean, it's a closet issue, isn't it?

- There's been a huge crossover audience for the book

- Mhm.

- Does that surprise you?

- No, because there always has been for *On Our Backs*. We're the only magazine in the world that talks about sex in an open, candid and informed manner. It's really pathetic. I mean, I could--

- Other than, say, Penthouse, or Hustler, or--

- They don't. I mean, I could do a better straight magazine than them tomorrow. I could do it-- write it on my thumbnail right now. They are cliched. They're passe. They're not telling men what men want to hear. They're certainly missing the women's audience completely.

I don't think most people notice that people like Sarah Schulman was first published in *On Our Backs*, and Dorothy Allison, Pat Califia, Joan Nestle. Some of our best-selling authors today were publishing their erotic fiction in *On Our Backs* when they couldn't publish it any place else.

And the photography is even more special to me in some ways because there was no precedent for erotic lesbian photography. None. There were literally three women in the world who were pursuing an erotic lesbian aesthetic in photography. And those three women, Tee Corinne Honey Lee Cottrell, and Morgan Gwenwald, were immediately published in *On Our Backs* and were the pioneers of what would become a lesbian pictorial.

It's unfortunate that as long as that people work in an erotic milieu, you tend to be labeled with this sort of bimbo-ism, that you're not quite smart enough. I think one legitimate writer who's talked about this at length has been Anne Rice, who in the beginning wrote under a pseudonym to write her erotic novels, and then just let everybody in the world know that, in fact, that was her. I'm so glad she did that.

- You're listening to an interview with Susie Bright, author of the Cleis Press publication *Susie Sexpert's Lesbian Sex World*. This is Rosemary Welsch.

Let's talk about the book in specific, because there are certain chapters that seem to pop out and grab people, and they have to run up to you and pull their dog-eared book open and point to you and say, what about this?

- Well, it's been gratifying that almost every chapter has been mentioned in various reviews or someone coming up. I don't feel like there was any one place where I bored everyone to tears. Makes me feel like I've been covering my beat.

- And you do it in such a way that once you're reading it, you start-- if you question it at first, a certain practice, or you thought something was like a little out there, once you start reading it, you do it in such a way that it's witty and it's enjoyable.

- It's user-friendly.

- I still read reviews where people say, we want to warn you about this, but, and then they go on to give this charming review of the book.

- People who do that are telling you more about themselves than they are about giving you a warning. Every time somebody says, this particular chapter may really drive you right out of the room, you realize that was the chapter where they had to go take a shower.

- Something that stood out to everybody who read the book was, of course, the last chapter. And speaking of new frontiers for lesbians, at least we have a new frontier for Susie Bright, which is motherhood--

- Mhm.

- --and sex during pregnancy, especially lesbian sex. I went through a lot of books, and I couldn't find anything on it.

- Well, there wasn't anything on it. And I was really surprised because I'm not the first to notice that there's a baby boom going on among lesbians, but among everybody; single women, extended families, unmarried couples of all persuasions. And there's so many books on parenting and having children, you could fill a room with them.

There's only one book that is explicitly about sexuality. And unfortunately, this book fits in with just about every other paragraph on the subject from Dr. Spock on out, which is addressed to a heterosexual couple, and it's addressed to reassuring the man that he's going to live through this pregnancy and somehow be sexually satisfied. I found that so distasteful.

I'm ready to write the new book on sexuality and pregnancy because I think the bottom line is that pregnancy and labor and delivery is a sexual act. All of your sexual organs transform and change, and they're leading the rest of your body.

Your hormones just are buzzing all around. And you're having new feelings that so often become attached to your sense of sexuality and your sense of intimacy. What you need when you're pregnant is the sense that you're desirable, and that you're very potent and fertile, and you have a sexual energy and magnetism that is unique.

I got more letters while I was pregnant from readers. I got more phone calls and communication from women wanting to tell me about what their pregnancy had been like, what their delivery was like, how it affected their sexuality before, during and after that made me realize this more than perhaps anything I talked about was a silent subject when it comes to sex.

Pregnant women are supposed to be like virgins. You're not supposed to be sexual. That's supposed to be the last thing on your mind. It goes along with our whole idea that children aren't sexual, that innocence and fertility is somehow connected to asexuality.

- I want to thank you for coming in. And best of luck with the magazine and with your new life with your daughter and being a mother.

- I look forward to seeing what I'm going to learn from her in the next few years.

- You've been listening to an interview with Susie Bright, editor of *On Our Backs* and author of *Susie Sexpert's Lesbian Sex World*, published by Cleis Press. This is Rosemary Welsch.

- Thanks for choosing *This Way Out*, the international lesbian and gay radio magazine. This week, Cindy Friedman, Mark Saccomano, Chip Young, Matt Binder, Keith Clark, and Rosemary Welsch contributed program material. Thanks also to Mike [INAUDIBLE], Elsa Fisher, and [? Libby ?] Gray.

- The Beatles, Heather Bishop, and the New Miss Alice Stone Ladies Society Orchestra performed some of the music you heard. And Kim Wilson composed and performed our theme music.

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- Audio cassettes of *This Way Out* programs are available by mail, individually or by subscription. Write to us for more information.

- We'd also like to hear from you with any comments, suggestions, or questions you might have or just let us know you're out there listening. Write to *This Way Out*, post office box 38327, Los Angeles, California, 90038.

- *This Way Out* is produced by Greg Gordon--

- And Lucia Chappelle. And we thank you for listening on KPFK Los Angeles--

- WOBC Oberlin--

- --and MGR [INAUDIBLE]--

- Among others.

- --and for supporting this local community radio station.

- Please do stay tuned, y'all.

- The following program contains language or images of a Frank or sensitive nature that may be considered objectionable by some. Listener discretion is advised.

- And you are listening to *After Hours* here on KPFT, continuing tradition. And we'd like to apologize, I guess, for one of our phone calls in the earlier portion of our show. There are always people who choose to show their ignorance through their hate, which, of course, is something we've seen a lot of in Houston and in Texas in the last year. There have been several major hate crimes in Houston in the last year. And our hearts and sympathies go out to the families of those people who've been killed.

But we're here to look towards the new year. And, of course, one of the things lots of people do this time of year is they make resolutions. And, I don't know, are you a resolution type person, Jewel?

- No.

- No.

- No?

- I don't try to do that because then I just spend the rest of the year being disappointed in myself. [LAUGHS]

- [LAUGHS] I can relate to that. I think the last time I made a resolution was about 12 years ago. It's the only one I've ever kept, and that was I will never, ever make another New Year's resolution as long as I live.

I mean, I know there's several things that I'd like to work on in the new year, but I'm not going to resolve to do them because then I'm just setting myself up for bad times. It's like, well, yeah, it'd be nice if I could lose 100 pounds, but I'm not going to make that a New Year's resolution.

- I heard that.

- [LAUGHS] But, of course, here in Houston, we're blessed with two print publications, *This Week in Texas*, *The Twit* and *The Voice*. I forget what their official title is these days. It changes so often.

- It's the--

- The New Voice.

- The New Voice.

- It used to be The Montrose Voice. And before that, I think in there somewhere, it was The Daily Voice or something, but that didn't last very long. But in *The Twit* this week, there was an article on resolutions, which I thought was kind of neat. And we'd like to share it with you.

- Made your New Year's resolution yet? Well, why bother? It's an--