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Thu, Dec 22, 2022 3:40PM 47:14

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, transsexual, hrc, transgender, talking, bisexuals, lesbian, transgenders, gay, gay lesbian, stonewall, queer, community, years, ricky, lobbying, discrimination, lives, started, speak

SPEAKERS

Jimmy Carper, Sarah Dipalma

 Sarah Dipalma 00:01

Q patrol was waiting outside. Hey, they must have gotten together for them.

 Jimmy Carper 00:06

Hey, keep patrol. See we get on the radio and talk about a good deal. It's nice to know the guys are in the neighborhood. It See. See? There in the in the truck? Yeah, it was the foot patrol. They didn't have enough people for. So at least we've got the truck going.

 Sarah Dipalma 00:30

Well, you know, it's summertime. It's nice to walk out there at night. Come on, volunteer for category. And you can do something good for everybody in the neighborhood,

 Jimmy Carper 00:38

too. You bet. You bet. Now, we've got Roy sitting out there in the lobby, right? And

 Sarah Dipalma 00:45

we're gonna very low subject. Yes,

 Jimmy Carper 00:47

he's very lonely. The number is 5265738. If you want to put in your two cents about what we're about to talk about, or to request your favorite queer music.

S

Sarah Dipalma 01:01

Okay, this show is we seem to become we're becoming famous for taking on subs for taking on issues. And we're going to do another one. Hey,

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Jimmy Carper 01:09

we're radical queer radio.

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Sarah Dipalma 01:11

Well, Andy Hoffman would be proud of me. Let me let me start with a little bit of background. First of all, I don't want to assume that people know what the what end is. So I'm going to start with that. Okay. And it is the employment non discrimination act. It was introduced a couple of years ago. And what it would do is ban it would essentially put gays lesbians and bisexuals into the same category for non discrimination as our other minorities. Now, I want you to notice that I said gay lesbian and bisexuals. I did not say transgender. That's right. You did not. Now here comes the story behind it. When endo was first introduced in 1994, the drafter of this bill, her name is Chi Feldblum was instructed by the HRC f the Human Rights Campaign fun not to include transgenders in the language. She has told us that directly. So we're not I'm not quoting you rumor. I'm telling you a fact. When the bill was introduced, and we discovered the transgenders, we're not in it. First of all, we didn't know the bill even existed until it came to committee. Phyllis fry in Karen Karen, who is the national director, it's time America went and tried to speak and they were not allowed to speak. They weren't allowed to give oral written testimony, but not allowed to speak. Well, the bill was proposed without transgenders in it, and it didn't go anywhere. Since then, for more than a year, it's time America has been lobbying along with several other groups to produce their own version of ENDA, which would be transgender inclusive. Now, this is an important point. Because I have been reading in the papers about people who are saying, well, why are transgenders riding on our boat? Why don't they get their own boat? Yes, pay attention, people. We had our own vote. We didn't ask HRC F to include us. We didn't ask them to do anything for us. We did this on our own. We got our own version of ENDA. And while our political leaders were at the Transgender Law conference in June 14 and 15th, the HRC F went to the aid for Senator Jeffords Senator Jeffords was sponsor of the bill, and they got transgenders removed from the employment non discrimination act. Furthermore, they went so far as to go to the aid for Senator Jeffords and I absolutely refuse to accept any amendment that would be in favor of transgenders in any way. Now, I'm not a person to mince words, so I'm not going to that stinks. We're talking about the Human Rights Campaign fund. And I think I should probably stop calling that because I think what we're talking about here is a special rights campaign fund. We're talking about an organization that says, Well, we're we will work for employment, non discrimination for gay lesbians and bisexuals, but we're gonna leave the transgenders out. That's not human rights, that special rights. So I mean, let's just call this what it is. So the result of this has been a galvanizing of the transgender movement like I have never seen before. It's so happened that the day that the word came out that they had gotten transgenders removed from our own bill. So happens the day that this happened. Ricky Wilkins, Jessica Xavier, Karen, Karen and I were all sitting in the same room. Ah, bad timing on part of the church. It so happens that said that some of the biggest than some of the more well known national leaders were sitting there and said, We

ain't taking it this time. The result has been that for the first time ever, it's time America, transgenders, transgender nation, in transsexual minutes have all united. That has never happened for maybe we want to send HRC F a postcard and see thanks. Yes, you know, but that has been that has been the end result of this. Now, what are we after? We're gonna go after the HRC f where it hurts. We're going after their money. Okay. The HRC F. Human Rights. I'm gonna stop calling that because it's the special rights campaign fund. They are 93% male and 97% white

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Jimmy Carper 05:59

jeans? Surprised? Well,

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Sarah Dipalma 06:02

yeah, I just thought I'd point that out. Because there have been people who have been saying to me, well, they represent the gay lesbian community. Oh, I don't think so. I don't think the gay community is 93% male and 97%? Why No, not at all. Um, so, you know, if you've, if that's what you think, reconsider, what we decided to do is that we are picketing them nationally. And we are handing out pamphlets informing people what the HRC F has done. And asking people not to donate. The first protest was at Lincoln Center in New York in a \$1,200 per ticket, dinner. Wow. And we turned people away. When people found out what had happened. They tended to this their tickets and left. Okay, so I say this, because I want to make the point again, we are learning over and over and over the individual gay and lesbian people don't know what their political organizations are exactly right. And when they find out, it's not what they thought. And so anybody who thinks Hey, you know, boy, she's bashing the gay lesbian community. Forget it. That's not true. We are after their political leadership, though, when incidents like this occur, when when they go in, have us removed from our own bill, and then won't even allow amendments in place that will put us back in it and go to the head to the aid for Senator and say, We don't want them in it because they're going to cost us 20 votes. Well, boys and girls, we're not going to react well to that. And we don't much care who does or doesn't like it at that point. Okay. Since then, there have been numerous pickets in rallies, including one here in Houston. That was done here. In San Antonio. It turns out that their their political organization, has a bylaw, which says they can't contribute to any group that is not transgender, inclusive. Wow, they want a refund on their money. Hmm. So the HRC F decided they had a problem and went to San Antonio. And when they got there, Terry Fredrickson, who runs it's time San Antonio was waiting for all bad. It turns out she's an officer in their gay lesbian Political Caucus. And unlike Houston, where transgenders are not particularly welcome, San Antonio is transgender inclusive, they made sure she was there. And so, theory Frederickson had a meeting with Elizabeth Burch who is the president of HRC F. Eight, Elizabeth burns, lectured Terry for 40 minutes, lectured, never, never allowed a word in edgewise and thought she was gonna get up to leave. She doesn't know Terry, okay, I guarantee you. And Terry said, now I've heard your lecture, you're gonna hear mine? Yes. The upshot of it is HRC F is convinced that including transgenders is going to cost them 20 votes. Well, they're right. What we're going to do is we're going to go to Washington and we're going to get 20 We've already got 20 representatives, who have said they won't support and if we're not included, we're gonna go find 20 More, we're gonna cost him 40 votes good. Now, why am I why am I upset about this? Because it's discrimination as we're talking about employment discrimination. Earlier we talked about about studies this suppose it studies that existed about transgender

transsexuals. And it turns out some of those studies were done on transsexual hookers. Well, how many of those people would be transsexual hookers? If they could have found meaningful jobs in the first place? Okay, could we have cut that number? 25% 50%. I don't think there's anything that you could do that could make the transsexual or the transgender community more angry. And I and especially the underhanded way that this was done and what it has done is brought people out of the woodwork that I've not heard from in years. It's time America's membership has doubled almost overnight. Good. Because you're hitting people where we live, you're hitting us in our jobs. Now, I don't think there's any excuse for what's happened, frankly, and I think it is embroiled in brass, brassy, an example of discrimination as I've come across. I have been describing this as segregation. The In fact, the HRC F is saying to us, you're separate and unequal and don't come back. And that's not the way it's going to fly. One other point that I need to make is that since then, Ricki Wilkins, who is the president of transsexual minutes, or the one of the founders has also met with Elizabeth birch, and the essential response from Elizabeth Birch is ain't no way ain't no, how we don't want you. Period. Fine. The the as it turns out, the HRC f is going to have a big fundraiser in Philadelphia on July 25. And their guest speaker is going to be Candice Gingrich. Oh, well, Ricky Wilkins and Jessica Xavier are personally going to leave their protests in Philadelphia. In San Antonio, it has already cost them money. We know that because I have been kidding up just a ton. I had 93 letters in my in my electronic mail yesterday, in nearly all of them were from people saying that they had planned to donate to the HR HR CF, and now they're not good. So we know that we're going to have an effect. Now let's talk about let's talk about some of the more positive things because in every negative, some good things happen. Yeah. Okay. First of all, one of the best things that happen is that we are starting to forge something with BiNet. Oh, I spoke with Lorraine Hutchins, who is one of the directors of buying them and they are going to be having to get together in Minneapolis. I believe that within the next two weeks, as a result of my conversation with her either Jane thi or Jessica Xavier is going to making the presentation to them. In buying it is very interested in forging and alliances with us good. So what may very well come out of this is that transgenders and bisexuals are going to form a pretty good alliance. That would be a good idea. Yeah. So again, it leaves me wonder, gee, should we send HRC if a postcard and say thanks, because I'm not sure this would have happened otherwise. But you know, those are pretty good sized numbers, you start putting bisexuals and transgenders together.

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Jimmy Carper 12:28

Yeah, because the bisexual movement is just starting out. And I would venture to say that when you consider sexuality as a whole, there's probably Ooh, two or three times more actual bisexuals than there are gays.

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Sarah Dipalma 12:42

Oh, I think that's probably true. In the bisexuals in talking with with Lorraine, it's clear that they are just getting started. But it's also clear that they think that we can help them with some leadership. And we can we can be very good for each other. Absolutely. And we're and we have made a concerted effort in all of our press releases over the years to always say, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered. And they're aware of that. So So I think that's going to be one of the good things to come out of it. Another one of the things that I think is important, is it is woke up the transgender community nationwide, Gert. A month ago, it was not cool. To be involved in transgender politics. transgendered leaders were a threat. Overnight were heroines.

Wow. It's amazing. People who wouldn't talk to me two weeks ago, are calling me now and saying, What do I have to do to help? How can I help? And again, this is great. This is the best thing since sliced bread. It's Time Texas, we've picked up 30 men, we picked up 30 members in less than three days. Wow, we still we've been hearing from people all over the state saying This sucks. This really sucks. I'm not gonna stand for this. And for the first time, they're angry, they're angry. And all of a sudden, transgendered people, people who were in the woodwork. Get it. They get it in this is, you know, I think that's I think that's terrific. Now, there are a couple of ideas floating around. And one of them I like very much is something that Phyllis Bri has suggested. And that is on Labor Day, September the fourth, we call this international transgender employment, that what she is suggesting is that transgenders all around the country, whether they get together in big groups or just in somebody's living room, get together and trade employment story, stories of employment discrimination. Yeah. And write them down and send them in to the law conference, who will document them?

J Jimmy Carper 14:47

That's what that's what it takes. You have to have the documentation.

S Sarah Dipalma 14:51

At the same time. She would also like them to trade good stories. No, yeah. If there are good stories, document those and send them into the law conference to

J Jimmy Carper 14:59

do There is some good there are some good stories certainly are the woman who emceed the dinner at the Transgender Law conference, who's who works with the police department, Melinda

S Sarah Dipalma 15:10

white way. Yes, boy, that

J Jimmy Carper 15:12

was that that just gave me goosebumps Melinda

S Sarah Dipalma 15:15

White Way was a deputy sheriff. And who is scared to death to tell her superiors that she was, was in the process of transitioning, sat down with a dinner and explain it to the boss who said, That's it.

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Jimmy Carper 15:28

That's the only problem you have.

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Sarah Dipalma 15:31

He said it's a non issue. So it's that was kind of amazing. And and

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Jimmy Carper 15:35

as she's, as she's telling it, she gets to the end of the story about how she's except that she takes out this badge and just hooks it on her dress. It was great.

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Sarah Dipalma 15:43

Melinda is one of the directors of the law conference. And it's one of the examples into Atomy prove that it doesn't matter whether you're a director of a law conference or not the fear that everybody has the same fear is all the same. One A Phyllis has other ideas, and I like this very much is that if if we have not settled anything with HRC, if by September, and trust me, we won't because then we want to talk to us. She suggests that everywhere where those gatherings are taking place where they are trading stories that go out and you get a rainbow flag. And I have a little ceremony and cut one of the stripes out of the rainbow flag, oh, put the pet flag back together with with safety pins in sin, the stripes and the flag into Phyllis. And when we go to Washington DC in October, we are going to go to the steps of the HRC F and cut those stripes in the flags and put them on their doorstep and say, Well, you didn't want this stripes. So here it is. You know you want it. You didn't want a rainbow flag. You want a black and white flag. So here you go here. Here's the stripes. And I think that's a great idea. It's a nice, quiet protest. Very, and I'm sure the HRC f will be thrilled to see us on their doorstep.

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Jimmy Carper 17:02

And I must comment on during the festivities on pride day that I noticed that you and Phyllis and a few others were protesting and you were doing it very, very nicely. I mean, it wasn't wasn't me. These are our

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Sarah Dipalma 17:21

friends. Yes with the gays and lesbians are our friends. And we keep trying to get what we want to make sure everybody understands that you're a classy

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Jimmy Carper 17:28

bunch. You know what?

S

Sarah Dipalma 17:32

Phyllis, and I have spent so much time and put in so much work. You know, I've invested 12 years in the gay rights movement. Phyllis has got almost twice that number. Yeah. We've spent so much time we know so many people. We have worked so hard. We're not out to get people. We just want equal treatment. That's all. That does not seem like a such I

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Jimmy Carper 17:56

know. It just boggles my mind that gay people who are also fighting for equal rights, equal rights that in employment and housing and all of that can't see that we need we need to combine forces with with bisexuals and transgenders and all other people for the same thing. Human rights.

S

Sarah Dipalma 18:20

Well, there are a couple of things. There are a couple of things about about this that did bother me. First of all, the amendment to from Colorado is on its way to the Supreme Court. Now this this is the the referendum that they had in Colorado, that would have specifically said gays and lesbians are not entitled to the same rights or at least so called special rights. Folks, if that bill passes, it isn't going to matter for gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Don't you think that's going to rebound on everybody? Sure. So the first thing that has bothered me and is it it continues to bother me is why? We don't all see the hangman's noose is coming. Yeah. Where are our heads that we are fighting among ourselves. When we are not the enemy? We are not the enemy is not us. No, and they're sitting back and laughing. They're having a good time because they're playing divide and conquer and we're falling for it. It's just it's beyond. It's beyond my imagine I talked with Diane zicatela. Diane zicatela is a happens to be a transgendered person, but she is very, very involved in watching the right wing in Colorado. She's born probably one of the country's biggest experts on this. And she has been telling me about some of the things that have been coming down from Focus on the Family one of the more extreme right wing groups and some of an already they have got legislation in that they are going to propose in three states in which they will try to take away child custody from gay lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. Do we not see that we are in this together? Are we just really that dumb? I mean, I'm sorry. I just don't get it. The other thing that has bothered me has been the volume of mail that I have gotten from gay people, particularly gay men who have said to me, I don't give a rat's ass about you, I want my rights and what happens to you is not my concern. I have I in and I'm talking a lot of this mail, it is clear to me that there is a certain element of people out there who truly who truly feel my rights are what's important and yours are no consequence whatsoever. And I suspect that a lot of those people are in fact, the contributors to the HRC. F would have to be these, you know, the HRC. EFF has eight full time lobbyists. They are the most highly trained, well respected lobbying group on Capitol Hill. Where's that money coming from?

J

Jimmy Carper 20:47

Yeah,

S

Sarah Dipalma 20:48

it's coming from what 93% male and 97% Why isn't it? Who are those people?

J

Jimmy Carper 20:55

Well, that ain't me. Greg Louganis

S

Sarah Dipalma 20:57

was at a dinner in Los Angeles a few weeks ago, a black tie event, which was ironically sponsored by the HRC F. And he got up and turned and looked at these people and said, every one of you people in these black suits and ties that are in closets. Have a hell of a lot of gall, calling yourself queers and sat down.

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21:17

Whoa, you're kidding me. Oh,

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Sarah Dipalma 21:19

those Greg Louganis. Well, gee, I agree with them. I agree with them. But how many of those people turn around and forked over a lot of money to the HRC of and for what to protect their special rights? I don't like using that term, because that's the same term that the right wing uses against gays and lesbians. They're always saying, well, gays and lesbians are after special rights. I don't think gays and lesbians are I think their political organizations are is certainly HRC F is. Now we've gotten some very good responses from the National Gay Lesbian Taskforce. In fact, we are going to be doing in service training with the National Gay Lesbian Taskforce. And we have reason to think that we may well be able to forge an alliance with them. So it's not that all political groups are that are no against Oh, no. But there is definitely an element in there's definitely an element of mean spirited selfishness out there. That is very troublesome to us. Somebody made a comment to me the other day, I thought I hadn't considered it. He said that he knew an awful lot of people who had one foot out of the closet. And they went around saying, Well, I'm out of the closet and I'm open. What they really meant was I'm close enough to the closet door so if something goes wrong, I can slam it shut.

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Jimmy Carper 22:38

Like the way you put that because I know a lot of people that

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Sarah Dipalma 22:40

will. And I suspect those exact again, those are very often the same people who are who are

their contributors to the HRC f these the people you and I were talking about this off the air earlier transgenders are the worst nightmare of a lot of gay lesbian people. Homophobia, I think in large part comes because straight people fear, homosexuality or lesbianism within themselves. Yes, we have that same effect on a lot of gay and lesbian people. We are their worst nightmare because we are with a most fear. It's one of the things that lesbian separatists hold against us constantly. Because many of us do wear lipstick and do wear makeup. And so we represent all those things they most despise. You know, we are we are upholding something that they think is anathema. Lots and I've heard from many, many gay men who tell me that they they dislike us because we represent the fairy queens. We represent the bad images that turn up on newspaper reports in a newspaper and television. And it shows how little we know about us. Yes, what it's hard for me to understand in winning the interview we're gonna do with Ricky Wilson's, you're going to hear her talk about this. The fact of the matter is, I spent a month this last month researching Stonewall. And it is contrary to what you made the revision is that you may hear the people who were at Stonewall were not only drag queens, many of them were in fact transgender people. Many of them were in fact, people of color. Oh, yes. We're have those people gone in the movement? When you read the stories of Stonewall today, is there ever an acknowledgement of any of the people of color is

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Jimmy Carper 24:22

not so much people of color, I mean, for when they had the ducks were there to, you know, drag queens,

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Sarah Dipalma 24:28

and so all of a sudden, the history of revision is that Stonewall was gay and lesbian people only. And that's not true. Over the years, what has happened is there has been a move to say gay, lesbian, gay, lesbian, and transgender people in bisexuals who were there has simply been dropped out. Now that we're trying to claim our rightful place, people think well, but it was always a gay movement. No, folks, you better go back and review your history. It wasn't always a gay movement. This is primarily come about in the last A few years that this issue has become such a problem, and in large part, it's because we're not willing to simply take excuses anymore

J

Jimmy Carper 25:08

if you we wasn't last week or the week before we played the history of the Stonewall riots were when they went back 1015 years afterwards and interviewed people who were there, that's right. And a lot of the people they introduced that they talked about drag queens and interviewed people, but these were people who lived in drag. So we're talking about transsexual,

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Sarah Dipalma 25:34

we're talking about transgender people very least, that's right. And but the revisionist the new revisionist history of Stonewall is has been cleaned up a lot. Yes, it's been cleaned up a lot. And

IT'S NOT TRUE. AND YOU'LL hear RICKY WORD WILSON'S TALK ABOUT THAT. BECAUSE SHE KNOWS THESE PEOPLE PERSONALLY.

J Jimmy Carper 25:50

You'll you'll hear people talk about Stonewall and and say that, that The Judy Garland death had nothing to do with it.

S Sarah Dipalma 26:02

Yeah, oh, the yellow brick row. Exactly. The fact of the matter is that what we're talking about here is we're talking about employment discrimination. And here's how this sounds to us. And I've been I've been debating for three days, whether I want to say this on the air and I think I'm gonna go ahead and do it anyway. Gays, transgender people have been in this the gay lesbian bisexual movement since day one. And this took place in 1969 or 1995. So this is what 24 years later. Yeah, folks, stop telling me you don't know who we are. Because I'm not buying that excuse anymore from you. The next person who comes to me and says, we don't know who transsexuals are, I'm going to tell them just how ignorant they are. After 24 years, grow up and get a life. Okay,

J Jimmy Carper 26:46

have you been 26 years? Yeah,

S Sarah Dipalma 26:48

if after all this time, you don't know who we are, then you're dumber than you seem. I'm just not buying that excuse anymore. And if I sound angry, it's because we're being discriminated against big time by people. We thought were our friends. We're not gonna sit still for we can't afford to. We can't afford to. So it just amazes me. I run into this all the time. I was speaking to somebody the other day, who said, Well, I don't have any motivation to fight for you, because I don't know who you are. My response was, Well, you knew my phone number. Why haven't you invited us to one of your meetings to make a presentation? And the response was, Well, um, I said, so you're not really interested in finding out who we are either. If you knew I'd find out who we were, you'd have to fight for us, right? It was a long pause. You see, it happens what we're running into here.

J Jimmy Carper 27:39

You don't look like me. So you can't be like me.

S Sarah Dipalma 27:43

Actually, we have a hell of a lot more in common than most people know, if they would just get an opportunity to find out of course. the fact of the matter is we're talking about the same

an opportunity to find out of course, the fact of the matter is, we're talking about the same issues. Do gays and lesbians deal with cut child custody issues, church or so to transgenders? Do we deal with employment discrimination? You Bet Your Life? Okay. Do we deal with him? Do we deal with discrimination on the basis of, of our appearance? Sure, we do. Do we deal with do we deal with discrimination in medical care? Do we deal with discrimination in all sorts of different ways? Sure. So how different are we? It's artificial, these differences. They're artificial. They're superficial.

 **Jimmy Carper 28:22**

And you're listening to the these differences on KPFT Houston, and KEOS College Station, Bryan, and you are listening to after hours with Jimmy and Sarah.

 **Sarah Dipalma 28:31**

Thank you. And I feel bad that we, I have a theory about how we've come to this. And we need to go to Ricky Welch's interview here in a few minutes. But this is my own theory about how we've come to this point. After this, much of this, this problem has surfaced since the last election. My own feeling is that right now. Gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people are feeling like they're no longer part of the process. They are feeling unempowered so to speak. If you can't fight with the enemy, what do you do? You quarrel among yourselves? Yeah. And I we're gonna have to get smarter and be bigger than that. That's not good for any of us. When we didn't win, this happens. Newt Gingrich wins. Bob Dornan wins. Paul Cameron wins. We're not helping ourselves by doing this. It is my fervent hope I'm talking about this on the air. That people out there will hear this and say, you know, maybe she's got a point by tearing ourselves apart. We're really making it easy for the people who are genuinely are enemies. And that's the truth of the matter. I am a big, big admirer of Eddie Hoffman. And one of his sayings is the slogan for its time, Texas. And it says when decorum becomes repression, the old With Dignity free people have is to speak out. Well, I believe that and the people that we need to be speaking out to is not to each other. We want to be unified. We need to be speaking out to the people that are keeping us in the position that we have no one to quarrel with, but each other. Yeah, that's what I'd like to see us do. So enough of that, if you'd like. Why don't you want to go to the interview, Ricky? Sure. Okay. I'm Ricky Wilkins is one of the CO one of the original members of transsexual minutes, and I had to snip some of this interview. But you're what you're going to hear is that Ricky has a very dry sense of humor. And if a little bit off off the beaten track, but if you listen to what she says, she's a very thoughtful person. And and don't let the name transsexual minutes fool you. She's not a threatening person. Anyway. So with that, we bring you Ricky Wilkins. We're all listeners of after hours. You're used to hearing me on the show, and you think that I'm a radical activist or an activist, activist. I'm going to introduce you to an activist, activist right now. This is Vicki and Wilkins. The she is a co founder of transsexual minutes. Welcome to after hours.

 **31:15**

Thank you, Sara. Glad to be here.

 **Sarah Dipalma 31:10**



Sarah Dipalma 31:10

First of all, explain to people what transsexual minutes is, I mean, the title sounds threatening.



31:26

Well, actually, I think everything that I know I learned from Rita Mae Brown back in late 60s. The National Organization for Women now went about purging all its supposedly lesbian members, plus anyone suspected of being a lesbian member and the following year, I think 69 Rita Mae, who most people know from her first book review for Changle, showed up with a group of compatriots and took over the stage wearing these lavender T shirts. I said, the lavender, Amanda's so I kind of liked the hint of paranoia in the name. And so we did up the T shirts, and they started selling was really intended as just a joke, but menace has no policies, no officers, no offices, no dues, no fees, has no stance on any issue, has no membership, it's more of an idea. So it's



S Sarah Dipalma 32:19

actually for people in the gay lesbian community. If you're familiar with the queer nation, it's set up very much along the same lines.



32:25

I would say so yeah. You don't have to be a transsexual part of the transsexual man. It's like, you don't have to be anything. New. We prefer that you did and I don't know.



S Sarah Dipalma 32:33

Okay, now you're originally you're from the New York City area. Is that right? Yes. Okay. Now, how many chapters are transsexual minutes? Are there I mean, are you up and down the East Coast are up and down the West Coast are



32:44

where, you know, I don't even know I tell people, anyone who buys a t shirt automatically has their own chapter and it's in charge of it. So I have no idea how many chapters there are at this time, I guess. Firstly, in the hundreds.



S Sarah Dipalma 32:57

Okay, so you answer politicians the same way I do. When they asked me how many people are during this time, Texas? And I say yes.



32:04



33:04

I usually say 1000s. And we're circling your office right now.



Sarah Dipalma 33:09

Okay, now you're involved in something that's going to be coming up called Lobby Day. Once you explain to the listeners what lobby day is about? Well, national



33:17

transgender lobbying day was an idea that was born just a few months ago, there were several of us up on Capitol Hill. And we decided to go around doing some lobbying. So we would call different congressional offices asking to meet with them. And something happened, it really struck me when I would call almost anyone's office on Capitol Hill and say, I'd like to speak with your legislative assistant who deals with daylight gay by lesbian affairs, they would say something very, very interesting. They would say, just a moment, please. I thought that was very intriguing. And then that person would come on the line. Now, if you had done that 20 years ago, they would have go, huh. When you now call up and say I'd like to speak with your legislative assistant who's in charge of transsexual and transgender affairs, they go, huh. We want to get them to say just a moment, please. So we figured instead of taking four or five people up there next time, we would go up with 40 or 50, close friends, and make the rounds and keep doing it every year until we had established a measure of a moral presence and a kind of narrative in their minds of what's going on in our community and the kinds of challenges that we face. And the amount of discrimination that goes on and the way we are targets of violence and these kinds of issues needs to be raised on an ongoing basis in the nation's capitol. And that was the idea for national transgender lobbying. Now, when



Sarah Dipalma 34:50

you go to Washington, and you meet with the legislative aides, what kind of reaction do you get?



34:56

Well, usually they undress and And I personally was shocked, I mean, shocked to find out how many of them actually wore pink satin panties to work. And those were just the man and women was a whole different story. But after they put their clothes back on, most of them are outstandingly friendly, I would usually start off by saying something like, you know, I don't want to take up too much your time because I'm sure you've already met with five or 10 transsexual and transgender activists this morning. And they would just kind of fall over because they had never met any of us. And they were as intrigued with meeting us, I think, as we were with meeting them, and it was the first time they'd heard the stories people would say, well, aren't you covered under? You know, WSB and, and gay legislation? And we go no, and say, well, but you're covered under like, you know, women's and sex discrimination, stuff like that? No, the courts have consistently held that doesn't apply to us. Oh, well, you're not covered at all right? Go? Yeah, you got it.

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Sarah Dipalma 35:56

Very, very good. You get an A and deduction. I've talked to the listeners before about going to Austin and talking to legislators and that we actually wouldn't legislator who had a cigar dropped out of his mouth when he discovered it was a transsexual, and it looked at me and said, I'm gonna say we don't look like we do in Geraldo, do we? And he had no response to that at all. It's just amazing. Now you're hoping to get one or two people from each state is that the idea?

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36:22

That's the idea. We're up at around, we had hoped to get 40 or 50 people, we have almost 70 People that are solid, oncoming another two dozen. And I don't know the breakdown. But we've hit most of the states, we're still missing a few states that just don't have large populations like Montana, Utah, South Dakota, that kind of thing. But basically, in the more populated states, we have at least one person for most of them. And again, this is just the first year the the gender community has never stepped out of the closet quite this way and said, We're here. We're queer, get used to us. And actually gone about trying to inform people about what our lives were like and ask for our rights as citizens. Normally we've tended to meet inside hotels and conventions, gone quietly back to our closets, not all of us, but a lot of us. So this is the first time I suspect as we get rolling, and as there is momentum, people will start to come from those less populated states, and we'll hit all all 50 of them plus Puerto Rico in the Virgin Islands.

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Sarah Dipalma 37:27

Now, when you go there, are you lobbying for anything specific? Are you there to lobby on behalf of ENDA? Are you there for just showing the flag so to speak?

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37:36

Well, as I said earlier, we're, we're interested in lobbying specifically around well, let me let me just back up for a second. We're interested first in establishing a kind of moral presence. Here we are, here's what happens in our lives. We're also interested in establishing a kind of narrative. So they understand having seen us several times, what kinds of things we're going through what these challenges are. In addition to that, we also want to talk to them about specific things like the employment non discrimination bill and, like, health care, we were sacrificed right up front in the health care debate. One of the first things that Bill Clinton said is, this will not be used to cover transsexuals, and transvestites, which makes it even more difficult for us to get in keep surgery or get medical care. We also want to talk to them about the way we're treating the military. Right now. It's still grounds for dismissal. If you're caught dressed in clothing deemed inappropriate, we want to talk to them about the Bureau of Prisons about prison conditions. What happens you take a transsexual transgender woman and throw her in with a person full of men. We know the answer to that it's not probably as American say on the air, but it is something that needs to be addressed. Child Custody laws are a whole bunch of things that we need to start opening a dialogue on and starting to just educate them as to what's going on out there.

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Sarah Dipalma 38:57

Now, one of the things that we've talked about on our show, is what makes a person decide to become an activist who talked on the show about how sometimes activist or perceived both inside and outside the community is something less than something less than human were role models where criminals were whatever, but we're not people. Why did you decide to stand up and fight for your rights? Why not just woodwork?



39:23

I don't know that I've ever made that decision when I was in the eighth grade. And they gave me one of those little tests and said, What do you want to be when you grow up? I didn't say Well, I think I want to be a transgender transsexual activist. I don't know if that checkbox will ever be on any one of those tests. I haven't got a clue on that one. I really don't. I think that Well, I mean, this goes off into some other issues, and this is just my own private opinion. I think that most people go through life, and maybe we do have that sense of quiet desperation that the road talked about the desk abrasion is not because our dreams aren't being met, the desperation is often because we don't sense and underlying our lives any particular meaning. And what we're searching for is a sense of meaning that that kind of desperation, I sense is doubled and redoubled within the transgender and transsexual community. Because we're not only weren't meetings to our lives, we want some kind of meaning to the kinds of suffering that we've endured. And I don't mean to say this life is nothing that unmitigated suffering. But there is a good bit of it, there's a tremendous amount of depression as community, a lot of us have gone through painful breakups and losing families and, and all those kinds of horror stories, we don't mind going through those things, we don't mind bearing the pain, we just want to feel like it has some kind of meaning it goes someplace, we want to feel, when we check out that we've left things better than we found them, that we've left our footprint someplace and made it better for the next generation of transgender and transsexual kids coming up, that we have made our lives mean something. And I think that if someone gets sucked into or drawn into activism, it's in pursuit of making some kind of meaningful statement of the experiences that we've gone through. And although I was raised as a good Jewish girl, I actually have a very kind of Christian perspective on this. I think that I think that story of the carpenters is essentially correct for a lot of things. I think that the kinds of things that we go through mean that you do die, you do suffer for other people's sins, people are going to take out on you their transphobia, and their gender phobia. And part of you is going to die in the process. And if you're lucky, you will be reborn, you will not be the same person, but you will be reborn and you will rise again. And the trick is to make that happen without carrying the hate and the hurt on with you and passing it on. Again. The trick is to go through that whatever kind of spiritual death that is, and come out of it as a better person and a more whole person to make something good happen. And it's a very difficult thing to not be embittered, to not just get depressed and go into a corner, to not be consumed with rage at people that hate you simply for what you are. But I think that if anything, the experience of any type of oppression, and perhaps specifically this oppression, since we're so marginalized, is one of learning how to return hate with love and learning how to make something good come out of something bad. Even when people around you are telling you that you're not worthwhile, that you're not welcome. And let's you're not right. And I think it's those kinds of redemptive gestures that draw us back into some kind of activism with our lives.

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Sarah Dipalma 42:56

Now, you were the first person that that started to talk about transgendered street kids, and some of the kids who were injecting street level hormones and developing aids after sharing needles. And we were talking about that a little bit. How did you first how did it first come to your attention? Are you doing work with transgender three kids? I mean, how did you find out this was occurring?

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43:21

Well, actually, I started working with, I mean, I basically was raised whitebread in the suburbs. And it's not a culture or a part of this culture with which I had a lot of contact. We started trying to set up a, essentially a Big Brothers Big Sisters program for transgender youth, I should say transgender and questioning youth. And in doing so, there is an enormous tree population in New York or transgender kids, what they call throwaway kids, they have no parents, they sleep on the streets, they're turning tricks, sleeping in doorways, and so on, and hanging out around the Christmas tree piers. And we started working with them. And also some of the people who have been sex workers have been in that community and are now grown up and talking with what kind of talking with these folks about what kinds of challenges these people face on the streets. And one of the stories that came out is of people who are out there, sharing needles. They get hormones off the street because they can't afford the script to get them or even if they could, they couldn't afford to go buy them through a drugstore. And people are sharing needles and in some cases becoming HIV positive in order to get the hormones they need to get the medical treatment that they want. Because this is a marginalized and by and large, non white portion of our community. We don't hear about them also as adolescents or in some cases, very young adults. They are not particularly visible and are extremely vulnerable. They have no resources. They don't have the kind of agency that someone like I'm myself might have or I can at least pick up the phone and call my city council. person or I can drive in my car, I can do this or that they don't have even those resources. And one of the things is community needs to do. And I go back again to the idea of conventions as being an important starting point but not being an endpoint. This community needs to stop getting together to dress and, and give itself awards at nice air conditioned hotels across the country, or go back into the woodwork in its own private homes and communities start to go out and realize that their entire segments of this community who are economically and racially disadvantaged, who are not spoken for and not heard from, and who desperately need some kind of advocates out there speaking on their behalf, we have not grappled even begun to grapple with those moral issues. And at too many gender conventions, we count from a success if we have 300. White people from the suburbs who come to cross dress, and a cold people like me running around and black minus T shirts making fools of ourselves. And we think that's a great success. And maybe in some terms it is. But in terms of the kind of carnage that's going on in our streets right now. It's not a success, and we need to start to come to grips with it.

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Sarah Dipalma 46:09

We have been we get a lot of letters and a lot of phone calls. And it has become very clear to us that a lot of our audience is young. And sometimes I'm surprised how young they were 1516 years old. Many of these kids are just scared to death. They know something's different. They haven't quite figured out what yet. But they're listening to our show. And they're putting their

transistor radios under the pillow. And they're listening in. And when they call or they ask what the resources are for them. We have a hard time and from that we haven't been able to find them. We haven't even been able to create them. Do you is Are things better in New York? percent everything seems bigger in New York all the problems seem bigger. Have you found any solutions there that we might be able to put to use here in Houston?



47:04

I don't know the answer because I'm not familiar enough with Houston and New York is just starting to get itself together around transgender transsexual and questioning you