

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah. "Elton's Song," that was by Elton John, how he fell in love with this sharp looking pool player and what happens then. Before that we had "Black Angel's Death Song" with, the name remains the same, Dave. Yeah. That's something new from them. Good group, good group. We've played them before, we'll be playing them again.

I'm looking forward to getting something new from Outpunk. That ought to be coming in this week, so I'll have something brand new by them. That's new queer punk music, you'll be hearing it next week. And by the way, next week happens to be the 350th After Hours show, so we might have a few surprises.

And that again, it might be just what you're used to getting every week, good old gay, lesbian, queer, transsexual, transgendered, bisexual, all of that kind of stuff, all rolled into one. We like to use the word queer because it's one word. That kind of show. Music and camp and interviews and just what you've come to expect from After Hours.

And speaking of what you've come to expect from After Hours, a very popular woman these days and we are very proud to play her in the QMZ, and this is my favorite. I'm always playing everybody else's favorite, this is my favorite, "Chrome Plated Heart," and it's by of course, Melissa.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Yeah.

DIANE WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Whoa.

DIANE WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Hey.

DIANE WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Beauty, hey.

DIANE WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Hey.

DIANE WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Aah. It's the other way around, isn't it?

DIANE Yeah.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: I forget, OK.

DIANE Whoa.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Hey.

DIANE That was great.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: I like Melissa.

DIANE And she's opening for the Eagles, go figure.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: I know. I know.

DIANE That's a concert to be at though [INAUDIBLE].

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: That's going to be-- all of these really straight white boys who are now straight white men, I mean it is the Eagles and lesbians all over the place.

DIANE And they all hang out together and they love each other and it's wonderful.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Isn't that weird?

DIANE Let me tell you where I was last weekend during the day.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Where were you?

DIANE I was at Miller Outdoor theater at a kick country concert.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Ooh. Yes.

DIANE And a country concert, the three lesbians-- the three lesbian sisters Karen and Bonnie and I were out at Miller Outdoor theater in Hicksville USA. And I have never seen so many racist Hicks and [? Nazi-oid ?] people in my life. They were terrible.

WILLIAMS: I mean there was a lot of really cool people there, and I want you to know there was so many family members. There was so many gay and lesbian people out there, but--

JIMMY CARPER: Hey, were you--

DIANE They were out there right in the middle of people flying the Confederate flags, spitting spit out of their mouths
WILLIAMS: into big breasts, things they brought with them, waving the Confederate flag all around the thing and--

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, brother.

DIANE I mean it was-- it was scary.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: What was that? Hank Williams junior night?

DIANE It was Clay Walker and Kevin, Eagles and Kevin with whoever and a bunch of other people, the Mavericks. And
WILLIAMS: the music was really good. I mean, we had a good time. We did have a good time, but it was enlightening to be in that other cultural situation that we were put ourselves.

JIMMY CARPER: Hey, gay and lesbian people like country and Western music.

DIANE Often.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Often. Yeah.

DIANE Hot people do.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah.

DIANE And I myself can dance to it. I don't like [INAUDIBLE].
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: The Brazos River Bottom, as testimony to that. We've got the Ranch, as testimony to that.

DIANE Of course.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah. Hey.

DIANE So we are, indeed, everywhere.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Uh hmm. And since we are, indeed, everywhere, why don't we all get on the phone and call 526-5738.

DIANE JAM KPFT. Jam, jam, Jam KPFT.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: That's right. Pledge some money for KPFT and After Hours.

DIANE The queer show.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

DIANE The queer show.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: So we can put in our share of the money to help pay the light bills and all the other things that have to be paid.

DIANE Stand up and be counted. And you can do it from the horizontal position in your room where you're listening to

WILLIAMS: the radio.

JIMMY CARPER: Sure can. Just take a couple of minutes.

DIANE You can do it from your car if you have a car phone. Go figure. Come by the station. Send us a check. Whatever

WILLIAMS: you need to do, do it.

JIMMY CARPER: We got great premiums and all of that kind of stuff.

DIANE That means free stuff.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: We got one more song coming up in the QMZ. Then we're going to end it. And that'll bring us close to the top of the hour. Then we've got--

DIANE A taped interview with me and Janet Cohen.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: And who is Janet Cohen?

DIANE Janet Cohen is the co-chair of the Board of the Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby. And Janet is going to be talking a

WILLIAMS: little bit about what Dianne Hardy Garcia was talking about, as well as some more localized issues.

And Janet and her lover own a business. We'll talk briefly about that. We're going to also talk about the quarantine of HIV positive individuals in Galveston County. We're, briefly, going to mention I think Senator Jerry Patterson's view that he thinks it's a good idea if we quarantine HIV positive individuals, where that came from. And what it means to us.

JIMMY CARPER: The idea came from.

DIANE That's right. And what it means to us.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: There's an ugly part of American history where we did quarantining--

DIANE There's quite a few.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Asian-Americans, Japanese-Americans, during World War II. So he wants us to repeat this pattern, is that it?

DIANE And we just had to pay a lot of money to Japanese-American citizens, because of the quarantining that we had

WILLIAMS: done to them.

JIMMY CARPER: And it was about damn time.

DIANE WILLIAMS: The only thing different in this situation is that if HIV positive individuals, all of us in the world, or even looked at like people thought we were HIV positive--

JIMMY CARPER: Like me. I'm HIV positive.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Well, if he quarantines everybody that's HIV positive, the difference is that it's people with diseases that may be around 10 years, may be around 20 years, may be around 50 years. But like everyone else, especially like people with diseases, it's a fatal situation. And they're not going to have to worry about the outcome.

That's like taking an HIV positive person to court when you know that they've been sick, sick, sick for a long time.

JIMMY CARPER: And just drag it drag it out. Yeah.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Keep appealing, keep appealing. It may be a little insensitive, but it's the truth. And we have to talk about it. Because we have to defend ourselves against it. We can't let it happen. And we're going to talk about that in this taped interview.

JIMMY CARPER: OK, sounds good. So we're going to end up the QMZ.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Queer Music Zone.

JIMMY CARPER: Yes, with-- well, first of all, let's ask people to give us a call, again.

DIANE WILLIAMS: JAM KPFT.

(BOTH): 526-5738

JIMMY CARPER: And support the station you listen to every week.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Every week.

JIMMY CARPER: Every week, every week.

DIANE WILLIAMS: And you know what's great about After Hours, too, is that there's so many of us that do After Hours. We all have different shows, different personalities. And I hope we touch a different part of you every weekend.

JIMMY CARPER: I think that's good.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Intimately.

JIMMY CARPER: The whole secret of After Hours that we do have so many different people working on it that you can get a pretty good cross-section of the gay and lesbian community. Because we've got some Scott with his [LAUGHS] trash--

DIANE WILLIAMS: Queen show!

JIMMY CARPER: That's right.

DIANE The Queen Show with Scott Lewis.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: The trash master, yes. And you know you're going to hear about what's going on in the clubs and bar music, and trashy mouth, and all of that. And then you've got Michael.

DIANE [CAT HOWLS]
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: And you're going to hear about radicalism and fashion all in the same week. And you've got Diane, who brings you incredible, incredible interviews with the lesbian community.

DIANE And men, too, when I get the chance.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah

DIANE Hey, we had Hog on here. We talked to him.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: That's right. That's right.

DIANE I love men. Stop it.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, OK. I'm sorry. And Jewel.

DIANE Who does everything.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah and you know with Jewel, I've noticed just looking over her past shows. She likes to drag in, well--

DIANE Drag? Drag in? Drag queen?
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: No, no. She likes to bring in older segments of our community. Not that jewel is old or anything, but you know.

DIANE So you heard it from Jim.
WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah.

SPEAKER 1: People need to call. They're playing football out there.

JIMMY CARPER: Football?

SPEAKER 1: You know they get a piece of paper. And they're banging it against the table. And they're playing like girls! It's sad. I had to get out of there.

DIANE Watch your mouth.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Well, who's out there doing this? All guys?

SPEAKER 1: No, Matt and your-- um. I have to agree.

DIANE My friend?

WILLIAMS:

SPEAKER 1: Yes, Diane's--

JIMMY CARPER: Friend? Guest?

SPEAKER 1: I guess. First they started like, oh, do you remember how they fold this? And they fold it. And they started kicking it. And now they moved the phones out the way.

JIMMY CARPER: Wait a minute! Wait a minute! What you mean Jim?

DIANE So we have the executive director of the Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby of Texas out in our lobby playing football

WILLIAMS: with a little piece of paper?

JIMMY CARPER: Hey, Matt, what's going on out in the lobby?

MATT: Yes, folks we're getting desperate for your calls. We're playing paper football. We need your money.

SPEAKER 1: And it ain't funny.

DIANE Please help us buy nerfs for these boys.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Listen, really, don't be embarrassed folks. These people, obviously, are easily amused. So whatever you've got to say will be helpful.

MATT: Yes, give us your money.

DIANE So we need money. We need money. And there's people at our doors handing us money.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Looks like Michael Crawford to me. Hey. Punch that button. Yes. So that number is 526-5738.

DIANE Jam KPFT.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: That's right. We're going to end up the QMZ with-- Yes?

MATT: Yes. I just wanted to say for the first person who calls in on a credit card with a pledge, we'll give you that paper football. Ooh, signed by all the After Hours crew. Thank you. Thank you.

JIMMY CARPER: OK, we're going to end up the QMZ this week,

DIANE I refuse to do the date-a-thon.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Date-a-thon?

DIANE You know, what you call in for that. I am in a relationship. Yeah, but I refuse to have a date-a-thon with any of the

WILLIAMS: people out here. If you want to talk to them about that, please do.

JIMMY CARPER: I wouldn't have a date-a-thon with any of those people out there, either, honey.

DIANE And there's some good looking people out there. I'm telling you.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, OK. Well, [INAUDIBLE]. Yeah. Are we ending up this?

DIANE With music, yes.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: OK. And you're listening to the QMZ on After Hours on KPFT Houston 90.1 FM. And another one of our favorite women

DIANE K.D. Lang taking a bath.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Yes, sure. Is she ever.

DIANE This is the picture. Let me conjure up this picture for you.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Yes, please.

DIANE And if you're a man, just picture, you know, Elvis or somebody. She looks-- just picture K.D. Lang.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Yeah. Hey, no matter what sex you are.

DIANE With appendages. Go figure. K.D. Lang, this is it. She's just come in from a hard day at work. And she wants to
WILLIAMS: take a shower. She fills up this giant, claw-footed, porcelain bathtub with warm water, bubbles. Takes off her clothes, and steps in, and sings this song to you tonight.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

And we're back. We are back. That's a Jewel thing.

JIMMY CARPER: That is a Jewel thing.

DIANE And we're back.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: And we're back.

DIANE I hate that.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: [LAUGHS] Oh, she'll be happy to hear it.

DIANE I hate that. Because we were never really gone. We were here the whole time. We got a pledge. Tell us about the

WILLIAMS: pledge.

JIMMY CARPER: We've got--

DIANE Several.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: We've got-- yep, we do have several. And I haven't been thanking people. And I guess I really should.

DIANE Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, mucho much, mucho.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: But we just got one here from Gary.

DIANE Hi, Gary.

WILLIAMS:

MATT: But he didn't get the football. It's still out there.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh. And he's not a virgin. He has done this before. And he liked it. He really liked it. He's doing it again. And he did his first time he lost his virginity to KPFT was way back when.

DIANE Way back when.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Way back when.

MATT: Way back when Buddy and Jimmy were there.

JIMMY CARPER: No! Are you kidding?

DIANE Buddy and Mary?

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Buddy and Mary, yeah, that's more like it.

MATT: Buddy and Mary.

DIANE Buddy and Mary show.

WILLIAMS:

MATT: Yes. He said it might date him. But he just had to put that in there.

JIMMY CARPER: Hey, Gary. Cool! I like that.

DIANE Well, if that won't date you, somebody else around here will.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: And there's a little question here. What prompted you to call in support of KPFT? And Gary called in, because he felt sorry for us. And he likes the QMZ. Well, thank you. [LAUGHS]

DIANE Feel sorry for us anytime you want to. We'll take pity.

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: Hey, I like that.

MATT: Well, he actually felt sorry for the people out there playing paper football.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh!

DIANE That's true. We have nothing better to do with your Saturday night than to play football?

WILLIAMS:

JIMMY CARPER: He gave you something to play with, is that it?

MATT: Well, that's it. Well, no actually, I tried to. But he wouldn't give me his home phone number.

JIMMY CARPER: Oh, how tired. OK.

DIANE So we appreciate it anyway. We love you. Thank you for supporting KPFT and listener sponsored radio. We're

WILLIAMS: going to go to an interview.

JIMMY CARPER: We are?

DIANE We are going to talk with Janet Cohen, the co-chair, wait a minute, co-chair of the Board of the Texas Lesbian Gay

WILLIAMS: Rights Lobby. She's from the Galveston, Gulf Coast area. And we're going to be talking about that next here on After Hours.

JIMMY CARPER: OK, let's go to it.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

DIANE Hi welcome to late night radio this is Diane Williams on After Hours 90.1 FM KPFT Houston. We're here. I'm going

WILLIAMS: to interview Janet Cohen. Janet is an active, active busy bee in the community these days.

She's got a huge, huge biography, a huge resume. Along with working with many volunteer organizations, she's a business owner. And she has a lovely partner in life that she's been with, oh, gosh, what? About 11 years. So let's talk with Janet Cohen. You have a huge biography, here, Janet. This is great. Let's just read some of them.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

It's long and long. Did you hear that folks. [PAPER RUSTLING] Let's just go over it, just briefly, just a moment. Unlimited Potential, you're a business owner. And this is Unlimited Potential, consulting, training, specializing in, but not limited to meeting the needs of nonprofit organizations.

It has a little bio on the back here about you. And it says that Janet Cohen brings a unique understanding to charitable organizations with her direct experiences as employee, board member, volunteer, trainer, and consultant, with over 16 years experience in counseling, fundraising, grant writing, and in the roles of executive director of financial development, marketing, planning, program volunteer and staff development.

Ms. Cohen facilitates organizations with a diverse mix of skills and resources. And charities have received millions of dollars from your fundraising endeavors. Not bad. I'm impressed.

Let's see. Ms. Cohen is a member of the National Society of Fundraising Executives, several organizations, and serves on the Board of Directors of the Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby of Texas and the Allan Calkin Fund.

You hold a degree from Penn State in individual and family studies. A licensed trainer and self-esteem enhancement, and I could go on. Welcome, we're glad you're here.

JANET COHEN: Let's leave that for now.

DIANE WILLIAMS: That's enough for tonight.

JANET COHEN: Well, OK, you can come on After Hours.

DIANE WILLIAMS: You're here.

JANET COHEN: Thanks Diane. And I'm really glad to be here, too.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Thanks. Well, listen. There's a lot of stuff happening. I want to know everything that's going on right now in your life. Unlimited Potential, that's a business endeavor of yours.

JANET COHEN: It sure is. I've worked for several years with nonprofit organizations. Unlimited Potential is a firm that my lover and I co-own. What we do is consulting, training, and grant writing for charitable organizations, 501c3 organizations, mostly.

Although, we also do some work with other organizations. Usually, that looks like strategic planning or grant writing. We do a lot of stuff with board development. We do a lot of stuff with teaching people how to write grants. We do diversity trainings, which are going really wild.

In fact, I might mention I'm going to be doing a training program for the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. To quote Annise Parker, I'm doing Homo 101. And they came to me and asked for that as the number one priority of what their staff's training needs were.

So long story short, anything that looks like human resources, or financial development, or strategic planning for the lesbian and gay community. I'm doing lib strategic planning work with them, right now.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Yeah, great. Hearing lesbians in business. And that's a great organization, too, if you've been involved with them.

JANET COHEN: Yep.

DIANE WILLIAMS: A little.

JANET COHEN: Yeah. So Unlimited Potential is fun. We do a lot of work with organizations. We also offer training programs for individuals. And a little later I hope I'll have a chance to talk a little bit about our self-esteem enhancement work.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Yeah, I'd love to talk about that.

JANET COHEN: Great.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Along with your business interests, you also have many other cool and happening stuff. The Texas Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby. Tell us about your involvement with that. I know that you're a co-chair for the board.

JANET COHEN: I'm co-chair of the Board of Directors of LGRL along with Gerald Aves from San Antonio.

Gerald was also co-chair of the LGRL board with Pat Gandy from here in Houston.

DIANE WILLIAMS: And Pat's been a visitor here to After Hours several times. I really enjoyed having her here.

JANET COHEN: Yeah, just a wonderful activist and has been an incredible mentor to me. When I first joined the LGRL board, Pat and I would get up at 5:00 in the morning to hit the road to get up to Austin or wherever for board meetings.

DIANE WILLIAMS: So we're lucky to have somebody like Pat working for us in Houston. And you know, I feel really lucky to have you here on our side, too, working on the Board of LGRL.

JANET COHEN: Thanks.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Tell us a little bit about what you're doing right now, some of the projects of the LGRL. I've got a lot of specific questions to ask you about. What do you think is the main project you're working on, right now? What's happening?

JANET COHEN: The main thing right now is that we're gearing up for the next legislative session. And what we're in the process of doing, right now, is formulating the best strategy to pursue our legislative agenda for the upcoming session, especially in light of the coming election. Because we don't know whether or not we're going to have a supportive governor or not. Ann Richards has been great. And what we need to do is strategize the best possible way that we can.

For the most part, the goals of LGRL will remain the same in the upcoming session. And I can talk very briefly about what some of those goals are.

DIANE WILLIAMS: OK, when's the upcoming session, do you know?

JANET COHEN: I Don't have the dates, right now. I'll have to get those to you.

DIANE WILLIAMS: OK, sure.

JANET COHEN: I can't do that now.

DIANE What are some of goals for that?

WILLIAMS:

JANET COHEN: Well, during the last legislative session the most important thing that we needed to do was repeal 2106, which is the sodomy statute from the Texas Penal Code. We had some wins and losses with that. The bottom line is that legislation was not removed.

For people who don't know what 2106 is, that was the sodomy statute in the Texas Penal Code. And it's used to discriminate against gay and lesbian people and issues of employment, housing, and public accommodations.

DIANE It's, actually, a sexual law that is pretty much, if not, un-punishable. It's hard to catch someone in the act. So it's
WILLIAMS: definitely, I know, used to discriminate against jobs, political positions, employment, like with the police force. I know that it was--

JANET COHEN: The Michael England case up in Dallas. There were several different cases along those particular lines. I myself, as a lesbian in Houston, was discriminated against in an issue of housing. This was back around 1981 or 1982 back here in Houston. And there certainly weren't any laws on the books that would have prevented that from happening.

So the removal of 2106 is a very important issue for LGRL. During the last legislative session, we had a win in the Senate, which was incredibly important to us. It was a very close vote, and we won. We expected to win in the house. And, quite frankly, we were screwed by the Speaker of the House. And we lost on the side of the House of Representatives, which was a very big disappointment to all of us.

At the same time, we need to take that disappointment and channel that energy into creative action so that we can continue to work without getting too frustrated. Because the removal of 2106 is still too important to us. So during the upcoming session, we'll be working on that, again.

DIANE And what are some of the goals of that upcoming session, or the continuing goals of the LGRL?

WILLIAMS:

JANET COHEN: Well, the continuing goals of the LGRL, one is the removal of 2106. One is to amend any current civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on the issue of sexual orientation.

DIANE Are there many of those, do you know?

WILLIAMS:

JANET COHEN: I can't give you an actual number. But civil rights spill over into all areas of legislation. There are several of those. And I hope that when you interview, Dianne Hardy Garcia, she'll be able to expand in more detail there.

There are issues of increasing AIDS funding that are incredibly important. Lesbian health issues are critical. Domestic partnership issues, and I know we'll talk some about that based on what's happening in Travis County.

The textbook issue, what's happening with regard to language that can be used in textbooks is critically important based on the radical, religious zealots and what they're trying to do in terms of church and state. In fact, there's some church and state issues with regard to the school boards, right now, in the County that I live in that are very important, right now.

The other thing is parental rights, reforming child custody laws, and things like that. So that issues of lesbian and gay identity will not spill into child custody battles during divorces. Those things are also very important in terms of what we're doing, child custody and divorce, also adoption, and alternative insemination.

So those are some of the things that we're working on, have worked on in the past, and will continue to work on. Because that's not over yet. We still have a lot of work to do.

And I guess it's also important to mention that there are only a few states in the entire country that have their own lobbies. And we are really fortunate to have in Austin a lobby of our own in this state, where we can have a voice at the capitol at all times during the session. That is a really important thing.

DIANE WILLIAMS: We have our own paid lobbyists. And that's a full time job.

JANET COHEN: Yes, it is.

DIANE WILLIAMS: And that takes money. It takes money, I know.

JANET COHEN: It sure does. And in order to make a contribution to LGRL, a person would make a check payable to LGRL, and send it to PO box: 2579. Mail that to Austin, 78768. It does take money in order to ensure that our voice gets heard on a regular basis.

DIANE WILLIAMS: And you can call us up at JAM KPFT 526-5738. And we'll have that information for you, too, that address, again. And the switchboard 529-3211, the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard of Houston, very good organization that knows what we're talking about, and has this information there.

JANET COHEN: Yeah, I think a lot of times people hear phrases like LGRL and THRF. And they're not really sure what the organizations are. Real briefly, these are two statewide organizations that do not work in competition. The Texas Human Rights Foundation deals with litigation. The Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby deals with legislation.

And quite simply, I know that when I first got on the LGRL board, I didn't understand all the politics involved in legislation. I just knew that I really wanted to work. Most simply put, LGRL does two things. One is we fight really awful legislation. The other thing is we create legislation that's supportive to our community.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Right. That's great. Well, when I was about ready to do this interview, I asked some of my friends. I got together, as I always do, and say, what do you want to know? And what a lot of people told me, of course, was about 2106, and where we are, and where we're headed with that. And I know that that's a continuing fight.

But the other thing is one of my best friends came up and said, I only have one question, and it's this. Will we ever get civil rights? Will we ever be treated equally? Will we see it in our lifetime? And what can we do about it?

And it's very disheartening to hear that, in a way. And in another way, it's positive. Because we're even looking towards it in our lifetime. What do you what do you think about will we ever get equality? Will we ever be able to hold hands on the street, any street and not be afraid to be shot, or sent to jail, or whatever? That's a big question. What do you think about it?

JANET COHEN: That's a really big question. And I can go in several different paths that the political activist in me wants to say one thing and the person with counseling [INAUDIBLE] background wants to say the other.

The simple answer is, yes, I do believe that it is possible that we will have civil rights. And they will come with a fight that we will actually have to claim our power. And when I say fight, I don't necessarily mean a bunch of anger and a bunch of aggression. I mean, what we need to do is claim our powerful selves, tell the truth about who we are, come out when we feel comfortable, and take little steps, and little steps, and little steps.

The more comfortable we are with our own lesbian, and gay, and bisexual identities that we are, the easier it will be for people to accept who we are. When we come out before we're really ready and we sound pissy about it or we sound like we're getting back at somebody, there's a lot of room for people to misinterpret that and then use that against us.

So I think it's incredibly important that we keep taking steps and coming out. And when more of us come out effectively and more of us come out effectively, whether or not my lover and I hold hands on the street doesn't matter. Or whether or not you kiss your lover on a street corner or in your car at a red light won't matter.

DIANE WILLIAMS: So you think it's like a mountain climbing, little steps?

JANET COHEN: Oh, yeah! And every day we've got to take steps in coming out it. Was it Joanne Llewellyn that used to say, if every one of us offended 10 people a day with our lesbianism, then in a matter of time it would be a great big so what.

However, when it comes to legislation, that does usually move slower. And we've got to celebrate little victories along the way. Because when it comes to actually changing laws, we've had some great successes. We've had some great disappointments.

But I think what we also need to do is recognize that many of our people work long and hard and volunteer time. And what we need to do is celebrate some of the victories along the way. Because it's too easy to become oppressed knowing that there's all that hatred out there.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Too easy to be burned out fighting it, too.

JANET COHEN: Yeah.

DIANE WILLIAMS: I have a lot of questions I want to ask you about the religious community and how it's affected us in our fight. I know I was involved with, not only the March on Washington, but the Republican National Convention here. And that was a tremendous turning point for many of our local activists and a little bit before that, as well.

I want to ask you about that. And knowing a little bit what I do about a situation in Austin, the city of Austin, right now, has an ordinance that is up on the ballot on May 7th. That's going to be before this is aired. But since it's still in our future, let's talk about that briefly. And tell us a little bit about that ordinance.

And then I really want to discuss the impact and the power the religious zealots have on us, and how we can best work-- I don't necessarily know if I want to say against them-- but for ourselves better. Tell us about that initiative in Austin, right now?

JANET COHEN: OK. Not too long ago, there was an ordinance passed that would allow domestic partnerships for city employees in Travis County. The radical zealots, basically, didn't like that. They created a big fight. They raised a lot of money. They started spreading the word. And there's now a ballot initiative to, basically, rescind rights that were already given.

It's absolutely awful. It's critically important that we lend our support. To that extent, there was an organization created called the Mainstream Austin Coalition, which was really a smart strategy. Because they chose a name that sounds just like who they're opposing.

In any event, the Mainstream Austin Coalition, right now, is doing everything possible to raise enough funds to match and fight back. The problem is these zealots--

DIANE WILLIAMS: Also known as religious right people. Is that who we're talking about?

JANET COHEN: Otherwise, known as religious right. And this is my soapbox. I always say we have to stop referring to them as religious right. Because that implies there's something right about what they're doing.

The problem that I sometimes have is how do we get creative about what to call these jerks.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Right.

JANET COHEN: We've got the religious fundamentalists extremists.

DIANE WILLIAMS: Pseudo Christians.

JANET COHEN: Pseudo Christians. We've got, as Nancy Lee Jose says, the christo-fascists. These people are really horrible. And the thing that's so awful about it is that they are very successful at raising money. Their marketing is slick. They bring in money from other communities. They do massive advertising campaigns right at the tail end, right before the election happens.

And we know enough about their strategies now, that we have to fight very hard in order to counter attack that. And it's important that people in cities like Houston and all around the state support the Mainstream Austin Coalition. Because Austin and Travis County is a trendsetter as a capital city.

And so what happens is if we can get a city ordinance passed that would allow domestic partnerships in Travis County and in the city of Austin, then that perhaps could spread to other cities statewide. And that's very important.

DIANE WILLIAMS: So how do you think that's going to turn out? What does that fight look like to you, right now? I know that there's fundraisers going on, right now. And if you're listening, I hope you've attended those fundraisers and just had a wonderful time. What do you think that that's going to turn out?

JANET COHEN: None of us none of us can really predict the future. I think what will happen is that trauma brings unity. And one of the good things is that our community does know how to rally and get together under difficult situations. I would like to see people from Houston and other cities rally around what's happening to support the Mainstream Austin Coalition right now. Because it will in the long run affect us.

I hope we win it. That's certainly [LAUGHS] an understatement of the year. I hope we win it. At the same time there's a realist in me who says that it's going to be tough. The next two weeks are going to be very tough. We're going to have to dip into some major money in the next couple of weeks. And if we don't win, I believe it will be more of a financial issue than anything else.