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SPEAKERS

Sarah DePalma, Speaker 3, Jimmy Carper

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Sarah DePalma 00:01

Let's start. Let's start by telling people what the high risk project is. They may or may not be familiar with that at all.

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00:12

Well, Sandra and I are both both nurses. She's a registered psych nurse. I'm a licensed practical nurse. And a couple of years ago, we were directors of Xena foundation that serves transsexual. We were looking at our community. And realizing a lot of our girls are real set, a lot of the women go through transition, but end up with drug addiction, making their living in prostitution. And we thought we wanted to do something about that. And started high risk project started with just one hot meal a week. Then found the space that was donated to to start to drop in and just met the expenses of the society from our jobs as nurses. And people were impressed with that, because there was a lot of a lot a lot of transsexuals on the street, homeless, hungry, just not receiving any type of care from anywhere. Recognized HIV is a problem. So we started writing proposals a year later, we had government funding to run our draft. And it's been a year now. And we've been through ups and downs, but we got got some money from the BC Law Foundation to write a law degree. So we've written a 60 page law brief with the help of Barbara Findlay who's a gay human rights lawyer in in BC. And we've written a pamphlet on HIV and AIDS and hormones and that sort of thing. What else have we done all the usual stuff, everything from talking and talking with people and helping them iron out their personal trouble trying to get some community activism going to go into the AIDS conferences and lobbying with the aid gay organizations to include. Sure, I'm missing a lot.

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Sarah DePalma 02:43

While there, that's, that's actually a pretty good start, let's, let's talk a little bit about why these people end up on the street. Now, I know one of the most common stereotypes about transgendered people, particularly the female, the middle, the female part of it, people will say, Well, what you know, they're all just nothing prostitutes and hookers, which is not true, first of

all, but those that are hooking on the street are doing so for survival, for the most part because they can't get a job. They're there due to employment discrimination. Is that also pretty much the case in Canada?



03:22

Christine Burnham in Vancouver, wrote an employment report to the best of my recollection that documented 70% unemployment in the community. Often it starts very early in life. Young person comes out to their parents and said, I want to wear dresses to school. I don't want to be a girl I want to be. And at that age, you know, family frequently just disown them. Kick them out of the house. Can you imagine that? Parents just kick you out of the house. And that I find it often true that no matter what age, people come out to their parents, my mother won't talk to me. My sister won't talk to me. But it's so much more destructive when it happens in an early age. Someone that's 13 or 14, and their father says, you wear that dress to school, you just don't bother to come home. So what else do they do them finish their education, they haven't got skills yet. Prostitution, he'd make a damn good living from that. The some of the pre op transsexuals, you know, they're a fascination for some of John's and they can earn more than the regular prostitute. And they're gorgeous when they started out are girls that you know are down and out and dying now. I've talked to their sisters and their friends from 20 years ago and they were gorgeous. young women. The other thing I'd like to say about it is that every single one of the prostitutes that I've talked to, they say they'd rather not be doing it. When I see the money that some of them pulling, you know, only \$500 a day, stuff like that. You know, there's been times when I've been groped, thought I needed some money. I say, don't do it. Not that I ever would. But we've talked about this. And they say, Don't do it, we wish we could be you. It's not a choice.



S Sarah DePalma 05:37

In other words, that's one of the important points that I try to make to people is that we have I have some experience with the transgendered street children. In every every single transgendered street child I have ever met, is it throw away, they did not leave the house by choice, they were forced out by parents, or forced out by family. And of course, that's a serious problem. Every single transgendered prostitute that I've met has been pretty much the same way they were there because they were forced into it. It was cook or die from starvation. We we've noticed in Houston, for example, we've only been able to identify one homeless shelter, one whole city, Houston, that will take an openly transgendered person. And we have, we have not been able to identify a single rape crisis center that is equipped to deal with transgendered women. And, you know, I mean, so where do you go, it's either you hook or die.



06:41

It's very similar in Vancouver, Rape Relief, there's separatist non feminists, they will not accept a transgender woman who has been battered for whatever reason, in their shelter. Out of all the drug and alcohol treatment centers, there's one that's accepting look, ism classes and all this stuff, and anti feminist separatism, it's rampant. Even even medical practitioners, some of them move to say we don't deal with your time and get away as us to the clinics, there's only two clinics for the whole of Canada. So if you live in small town somewhere, and your doctor

just says, I don't have the qualifications to deal with your tight you know, it's off to the big city, where it's expensive to live. Vancouver is a very expensive setting. You arrive in Vancouver welfare won't give you any money for three months until you've got that residency. Same thing for Medicare. What do you do in the meantime, going turn a few tricks. First thing you get used to the money and you want that money for your electrolysis, your surgery for whatever the hell else it is that you need. Even with our socialist welfare system, it doesn't work for us, we get about 25 cents on the dollar back from our our surgery. In BC we're lucky they made a policy decision that they're going to change that but by golly, it's been a year since they made that policy decision and no one's been paid for her approved.

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Sarah DePalma 08:20

Now I know in the in our community, there's a certain group of people that would like to make believe the transgender hookers just don't exist. They would like to make believe the transgendered street people don't exist. Because it's politically it doesn't make it look like you know, you go talk to a legislator and you want to present these image that all our transgender people are doctors. And we have a term for it. And usually the people who have that view they have we have the term here that we call woodworking. You know, they they they lately want to blend into the woodwork. And so anybody who doesn't fit into the woodwork, why are we just going to make believe they don't exist? You find a similar problem with that in Canada, very much.

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09:02

So people with the hit their head in the sand. We call them the blender. Just what to say? It's a complex topic. Everyone from the transvestites first showed up at our law project we invited we wanted to be inclusive and get all the segments of our community and on the project. And the leader of that community there shows up and says we don't have any discrimination. And yet the same people they don't hold any society meetings during all of the summer during daylight saving time. Because their family they fall and they can't be out in the delay the day. And in in our own community. It's just an untrue fear of being a people, people like you for who you are. And people appreciate honesty. And in the few years I've been here have been politically active, I haven't run into any trouble. Trouble at all. Some people appreciate the honesty they appreciate being able to see. See a transgender, that's not not the stereotype, not the Oprah, man and the dress and not that these stereotypes need to be broken. In fact, with Mary at this very conference, I went up to her after and said, like she had the three words in her presentation something about conventional conventionally dressed women, instead of using conventionally dressed women, just this conference, I mean, this, we are not conventional as a group. A lot of transgender people are really beautiful. And the more beautiful and intelligent they are, the more likely they are to, to cope with being transgendered by not letting anyone know. They're the same ones that say, they are not transgenders if they are. I'm a woman, I'm a woman, I'm a woman. I prefer to identify myself as a transgender woman, because that's what I am, I am slightly different. There is no reason to be ashamed of it or hide it in any way. There is discrimination. But I think the most effective way to fight it is to let people know who we are.

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Sarah DePalma 11:26

It's, it's always been very interesting to me that it actually, I'm not sure interesting is the right word, think it's more depressing, and that so many of the best and the brightest in our community. They just pass through it. And yeah, I, I sort of blamed the word transition for that. Because it implies there's a beginning and an end in once the end is taking place while you're gone. And I don't quite I don't subscribe to that philosophy. I think if you take from a community, you owe something back to it. And it seems to be a universal problem. And your act, you're exactly right in the transgender community, specially. It's often the best and the brightest, and the most beautiful, who are the most likely to woodwork, because they want to be able to go off and say, I'm a woman, I'm a woman and a woman. And if I never heard that phrase again, it would be too soon.

12:19

I just, I just want to choke them some the whole concept of passing is a red herring. Pass as one. And do we want to be like, like the women who accepted oppression? who find their feet ridiculous sheer buying their breath, because that's the social norm. And I think we have something to offer to both the feminist community and the male community in terms of, of what is gender? And what does it mean to this conference has been very interesting. Because it's been very much along the lines of my personal thinking about what gender is, and I've never really understood gender I mean, gender gender gets batted around people use it, is it they understand it? But what the heck is it and it's a social construct, figment of our imagination. And if it takes us 50 years, I think we will be will have done a real service to humanity if we banned the world of this. Gender, non just a non useful word that for everybody has meaning nobody questions what it means. But if you had to put it, if you have to put it down on paper, what does it mean? And what what purpose? Does it serve us? To have it? I don't know.

Sarah DePalma 14:00

We have. We have asked that question many times in the show, and we've had some really good discussion about it. In the past, we've had Martine reflect on the show, and we've had goroutine McKenzie in we've had several other folks along those lines, Kate Bornstein. And the issue comes up over and over and over again is the issue of gender. Now in Canada, you have an interesting situation. If you decided to bring legal challenges you have a little more help up during and we do in this country, don't you?

14:29

I'm going to go to the Supreme Court of Canada and challenge the charter. I forget the correct name of it, Charter of Rights and freedom and our Human Rights Act and say that it does not cover me that I am not recognized. I'm not sure exactly what tack we were. We're just at the point where we're going to decide our strategy One of the strategies I would like to propose is that every law that mentions male and female does not cover me and ought to be stricken from the books doesn't have doesn't have meaning. We've in our library, we've concluded that none of the existing grounds and the Human Rights Act cover me. For one reason or another, I shouldn't say just me, it doesn't cover the community. The community of transgender includes transvestites, transsexual men, the women, covers covers everybody who crosses that gender

boundary, including the butch dyke who routinely gets mistaken as a man. I'm going to argue I am going to propose to the lawyers that we argued that every law that mentions male and female and restricts union services to two male and female, female, is excluding me, because I'm somehow both or neither.

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Sarah DePalma 16:16

I have had an experience recently, I was going out to looking for a job. And every time I encountered the question, were asked to meet with female I look for the spot that says yes or no. Or how about neither? It's, it's you this society, it's just not equipped to for the idea that there's a third or even fourth genders, or perhaps no gender whatsoever. It and I realized why I understand why they do it on the job applications. But it will be my greatest joy the day that I see the thing disappear from job applications.

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16:49

Well, we have achieved in in certain areas in Canada that transgender will be recognized as a choice. In within Health Canada documents dealing with AIDS, they have agreed to put transgender down as a category that people can check, then we recognize that a lot of transgender will not check it. There's a there's a blend, they're the one, they will lie and say one thing or the other. And that's out of fear of being recognized. But as Sandy puts it in, in our publicity, no stats, no program, until we are documented as a community, I wouldn't be surprised that there's 4000, transgender in British Columbia. If we can document that eventually, then then there's a sizable problem that needs to be dealt with the fact that we we don't have the services we need and we aren't well dealt with, by by government, by industry, by our family, by, by society, and then let them until we exist in statistics, that problem will persist. We are taking the Government of Canada through the human rights through our federal Human Rights Commission, we are challenging them around the census, because we just had our every four years government of Canada does a census. And we did ask them in advance that, that, um, they should put transgender on it. They put a little blank square where people can identify as same sex couples and put down little anomalies like that. And I did put Trump down transgender there, but I inquired as to whether or not they were going to actually tabulate it. And the answer was that they would not be tabulating it. So it's a human rights case. I am not counted. I am not known. They they know who's married and who they know who's a man and who's a woman living together. But they don't know who is same sex living together and they don't know who is transgender living together.

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Sarah DePalma 19:14

Whereas one of the arguments that I've made on the the reason that it's important to get the word transgender, and into gay, lesbian, bisexual, every time that word gets left off, it's as if we don't exist. In one of the big one of the biggest problems is, if you only say lesbian, gay, lesbian, gay, lesbian, gay, it's as if the other two were or other parts of the of the community just don't exist. And even worse, it's not important that we don't exist. And after a while, that message gets assimilated. It's it's far more serious. People say to me, you know, well, you

know, it's the the term gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered. It's too long. It's a mouthful. We're talking about having people feel as if they're in bed. trouble and don't matter. I don't want to hear this excuse about the words being too long.



20:04

But you can think of lots of other creative names besides Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. One reason not to use those words in the title of an organization and something that you have to say every, every time you say something is that there's the problem about orientation, like orientation is not our issue, its identity. And I think, I think that's fairly clearly understood among, among the gay people in our, our community.



S Sarah DePalma 20:37

You know, one of the things that we've often said in our show is that when we talk about the right wing people, or the arch conservatives, they don't care about this. Labeling stuff, they don't care, but they don't see us as bisexual or gay. They see us as queer and they're equal opportunity haters the haters off. And so I agree with you that one of the things we've just got to get over in this community, is we've got to deal with the homophobia, just like this transphobia in the gay community. And until we get it through our heads that one day, they're going to come for all of us without differentiation, we're going to be in a lot of trouble here.



21:13

The creator of my understanding, does not record recognize gender doesn't recognize sex doesn't, doesn't care. It's like the sun, sun comes up shines on everybody. I have a spiritual master in India, and some of my brothers and sisters in my spiritual group, went to him and queried whether or not this was the right thing that Deborah has done, you know, to switch switch sex. And he just said simply, does she cause any trouble? No, he says, So what? What's the big day? And you know, this is someone that I respect is, is a spiritual teacher and leader of stature. And I think that's the right attitude.



S Sarah DePalma 22:03

I think that's the ultimate answer. What's the big deal? Now, when did you can't you? You said, you're going to challenge the going to take the case to the Canadian Supreme Court? When is that going to come up? Where do you know?



22:16

Well, it takes about five years we've applied for a grant, which is case development money. In Canada, there's I think it's about \$25 million. They set aside for all types of minority equality to make charter challenging. I think it's more like 2.5 million. And that I'm not sure exactly how much but there's a small amount that set aside for precisely this type of development work. And if they agree that we have a good if we're able to develop a good case, and they will do

some, I think it's up to \$50,000 that they will pay. Now normally, charter challenges cost much more than that. But I have Barbara Findlay as my lawyers is one of the leading gay rights lawyers in all of Canada. She can't do it. I don't think anybody. And she'll probably be donating all of her legal services. And I'm not sure exactly what grounds we will be using, we don't know for sure what sort of statute you need steps standing with the court, you know, and I'm not a criminal. So I don't have standing. But I'm hoping that it will be just on the basis that gender identity is not in the Human Rights Code, and therefore it does not protect me from discrimination.

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Sarah DePalma 23:46

Well, we'll have to stay in touch and definitely follow this case. And we've been staying in touch with Stephen woudl, via the internet, and we've been reporting things as they take place. And also, we've been staying in touch with Shane Langley in Australia. It is one of the key parts of our program, that we try to present views, and let people know what's going on in the area outside of Houston, or outside of the United States. What one of the keys and one of the most important parts of the internet is it's really made me learn that the world is really a much smaller place and a much more intertwined place than most of us realize. So I think it's really important that we share this information back and forth and have the opportunity to learn from each other.

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24:31

Well, I have an internet address. You guys stay in touch. Because we're a small community and what a neat thing internet is that we can share because our community, I mean, it's hard to even get a group of a dozen people to agree on something in Vancouver, you know, so over internet, we can haggle these things out until we've got our lexicon down and are wrapped together so that we're all saying the same thing because we're all off in different quarters of the world saying contradictory stuff. are using contradictory language and just confusing the heck out of a very confused population to begin with. I don't think we get anywhere.

S

Sarah DePalma 25:10

I have argued in the past that the transgender rights movement will be the first human rights movement in the world to have been built on the internet in a really no I really do think that's going to be the case. It is really been a pleasure having you on after hours in good luck to you up in Canada hope your face just knocks around thanks a lot,

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Speaker 3 25:41

Learn which to read and which to burn rabl word my soul to turn off over to the school board free to worship as I please. As it pleases the hear me praying my my school prayer once again boys and girls remind you that this activity is not mandatory. And those of you who don't believe in a Judeo Christian God is defined by Congress should feel free to sit quietly with your fingers in your ears. Like the atheistic even you are agnostics may want to plug just one year.

S

Sarah DePalma 26:52

Wow, what was that? That is the group I was talking about earlier the foreman with their political satire. It's interesting the on the inside of this cover they are posing with Oliver North. Who says of them? These people are weird. And yes, indeed they are.

J

Jimmy Carper 27:12

I'm as funny as a very weird group. Oliver North.

S

Sarah DePalma 27:17

I'm old enough to remember when school fairs were mandatory. Oh, yeah, me too. And I remember I was in an area that had a lot of Jewish kids. And so we're required to recite the Lord's prayer every morning. The Jewish kids thought, you know, what the hell of this in so I always felt sorry for the Jewish kids because they were all looking around. Like why are we doing this? And and I was one of those people that you know, even early age, I started out the whole concept of school. Prayer was dumb. Because you prayed in the morning you went out in the afternoon you beat each other up on the school playground.

J

Jimmy Carper 27:49

We even had, I remembered this really vividly because we had this really sweet homeroom teacher, she was dense as putting but really sweet, you know. But in addition to the prayer, she always had one of her students read a Bible verse every day, hopefully. And she invariably picked one of the Jewish kids to do it.

S

Sarah DePalma 28:17

Will you know those of you who are agnostic, as the song says, need only plug one year?

J

Jimmy Carper 28:21

It's just I mean, she didn't get it. She just didn't get it. It was it was great.

S

Sarah DePalma 28:27

I love it. I have been very intrigued by these religious people. There is a show that will be airing on PBS in the last week of July called the transformation. Ah, yes. And that show is about a homosexual transvestite prostitute with AIDS. Who, who supposedly gets saved quote and quote by these Christian Bunco artists is the only way I can describe and we were the transgender community was very upset about this. Since then, I've had an opportunity to screen some of it and it plays a pretty even hand. Most of the people that I've talked to who

have seen it have come out away saying that these these religious people end up looking pretty bad. Ah, because apparently at one point they turn out a person with AIDS because this person won't conform to their beliefs. Oh, I see.

J Jimmy Carper 29:27

Which is so you know that you're saying certain things right? Yeah, you got to play the game. Yeah, there's a price tag baby.

S Sarah DePalma 29:35

But channel eight was very, very good to us. They were I have to say that everyone that I spoke to down there treated me with absolute respect.

J Jimmy Carper 29:44

Yeah, we announced that you were going to be on channel eight and everybody saw up at me of course-.

S Sarah DePalma 29:50

But really were treated very well. We have very good line of communication has been opened up with and we do not intend to protest. Good. I was always very uneasy. about the idea of protesting, you know, the public broadcaster?

J Jimmy Carper 30:02

Well, you know-.

S Sarah DePalma 30:05

You know, and as it turns out the people channel eight really, they don't seem any more thrilled about this program than we did well, they're playing it at 1030 at night on a weeknight and essentially trying to bury it. I mean, that's, you know, you'd be playing on Monday nights, in theory, you're burying a program.

J Jimmy Carper 30:19

True.

S Sarah DePalma 30:20

That's true. So I in our attitude was, look, we, the long term relationship is more important than protesting his own program. Yep. So we just decided that we would leave it alone. But I did want to say because I know they have a reputation by many people in this community. Under the channel eight is viewed as being homophobic or at least not cooperative. And that may still be true, but I all I can say is that my experience was that we were treated very well and we got a fair hearing with them. You know, you got to say the good things, we have a bad thing.

 **Jimmy Carper 30:55**

You've been listening to. After Hours queer radio with attitude on KPFT Houston and KEOS College Station. I'm Jimmy Carper.

 **Sarah DePalma 31:05**

I'm Sarah DePalma. And of course, we have our motto which I completely screwed up on the last show. I listened to that tapes. What did I say what?

 **Jimmy Carper 31:14**

Well, don't say it. Yeah. Because I do want to I do want to say a couple of things here that we're going to the BBC News. It's a little change of instead of monitor news on the weekend, we now have BBC News, right at three o'clock for five minutes. And after that, you will be hearing the return of the sons of musical chairs with Billy Gilbert. And Randy and Elmo who are in the house tonight.

 **Sarah DePalma 31:40**

Well, and as we say, when decorum becomes repression, the only dignity free people have is to speak out. That's right. So we end with that. Thank you very much for listening. I hope that you have learned something. I hope you've enjoyed it. Please tune in again.

 **Jimmy Carper 31:59**

Yeah. And for an outgoing here we've got a little music by movie that was requested a couple of weeks ago called Wild Child. We are still doing that marathon so give us a call at 526-573-8526 KPFT.