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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

gay, aids, talking, book, spirituality, die, good, changed, life, information, houston, people, plague, live, community, pacifica, street, randy, loving, san antonio

## SPEAKERS

Jack Valinski, Ray Hill

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J Jack Valinski 00:01

Buck's multinational corporation The following program is underwritten by you, the subscribers. The subscribers to listener sponsored KPFT Pacifica ustun. The program is called Wilde n Stein, named after Oscar Wilde and Gertrude Stein. Join us as a collective assembles news events, commentary for and about the gay and lesbian community of greater Houston. You may not agree with everything presented on the show. However, like all programming here on Pacifica's KPFT, Houston, the show's purpose is to give information and stimulate discussion. Ray Hill, you're not on assignment tonight

R Ray Hill 00:40

I'm not on assignment tonight. And that's a wonderful new cart. You've got there for a while. Well,

J Jack Valinski 00:44

if you came by every once in a while you would hear it that is just terrific. I mean, last week you were on assignment to was at the San Francisco elections last night, and the week before was in Houston elections. You are running for office. And so it's actually been a long time since you've been on the show full time.

R Ray Hill 01:01

It's good to be back. Well, it's

J Jack Valinski 01:03

certainly welcomed, especially last week when we had one turntable. And we had a guest that

came in here at the last minute because he was tied up doing other things. But we were on the air last week.

 Ray Hill 01:14

Last week I was in San Francisco. Last week I went to the alliance meeting, which was very interesting. I hadn't been bad. And I was Lee Marsters guest at the Alliance meeting, and I won the door price.

 Jack Valinski 01:28

The door prizes Well, I

 Ray Hill 01:30

wasn't the door prizes. Love Actually was cash money. I've never gone to visit a group where I came home with money in my pocket. Usually, when I go someplace like that all of the money in my pocket goes somehow or other when they pass the hat or something. But this is the first meeting I've ever been to in my life where I came back with money left over my pocket, and more money than I went with i 175 bucks in the drawing and Barbara Goldfield is the one that gave it to me. I was very impressed

 Jack Valinski 01:57

how wonderful that was. Okay, well, this week, we've got a few things going on. One of them is of course, we got a small calendar because of the holidays. We're going to talk about, actually I did an interview with Toby Johnson, the person who authored Plague, a novel about healing, it's a very positive novel. We talked him on Sunday, I recorded that in OBS an old friend, you know, everybody's an old friend.

 Ray Hill 02:22

Well, I mean, Toby, I remember Toby before he got his pink glass frames.

 Jack Valinski 02:27

We will of course be talking about the transmitter situation here at KPFT. Which hopefully we're you're sounding good realize there.

 Ray Hill 02:33

You don't hear any in the background. Isn't that amazing?

J

Jack Valinski 02:37

No, we're here. Also, we're gonna be talking about a movie that's gonna be playing the 20th 21st and 22nd. That River Oaks called death in a family. It's a New Zealand film. And it's just absolutely wonderful. I got to see a sneak preview of that this past Sunday. And what else? Oh, we're going to be talking about the holidays, talking about the holidays, and what it is like if things aren't always so happy during the holidays, it's gonna happen to gay people. Yes, that does because sometimes the biological family, you don't necessarily want to go see them. So in the calendar, December 16, Wednesday at 7:30pm, the Gay Men's network topic depression from the holidays. For more information call 8699952 or five to 99754. That's 8699952 Or five to 99754 and December 16 through the 20th. That's Wednesday through Sunday, a toy drive for the Children's Center. By the fathers first group, you can drop off locations, you can call 2226662322666232 For more information, and Wednesday, December 16 At 7:15pm, the MCC our Christmas corral celebration. For more information call 8619149. And for more information on any of these events, of course you can call a switchboard. That's the gay and lesbian switchboard Houston five to 930 to 11. And if you'd like to get some more information or send information to us, you can send it to Wilde n Stein, radio, care of KPFT 419 lavet ustun 77006. And if you'd like to call us here, you can call us here at 526 4000. And that's our number. So let's play some music. And we can talk about some other things as time goes on.

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04:45

Author of play plague Toby, why don't you tell me a little bit about yourself the Fed he talks about the novel itself?

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04:52

Well, I'm a native Texan I grew up in San Antonio. I spent most of the 1970s living in Northern California, I moved back to San Antonio in 1981. And have been, I do psychotherapy and I, I'm the gay therapist in San Antonio. These gay male therapists are a couple of women now that are that are beginning to go into practice. I am a writer, I really think of myself more as a writer than anything else. Writing is not helping you make a living on. And as to decent, that I think of myself as an activist, while while this novel is really dealing with gay issues,

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05:41

dealing with gay issues.

👤

05:42

I think that part of of being an activist isn't just writing books, it involves a lot of things, being a therapy, certainly they kind of activism to do. I've never been terribly political, although being openly gay in the city, like San Antonio means being involved in political stuff all the time. Maybe I think the real political act is just being openly gay. It doesn't involve being, you know,

involved. And I hear so many people say, Oh, I'm not political. I don't quite know what they mean by that. Does it mean that they don't vote? Or that they don't sign petitions? I think for most people, it means I live in a



06:22

closet. Question. There's Shades of Grey of how you live in the closet and how you are open. So you've been dealing with the gay issue and the gay issue? Unfortunately, that was very much a. So during that, in the psychological aspect of it, how has it changed the community? And I know this can go on forever asking this question. But how do you see how things have changed?



06:47

Yeah, you're right, it can go on forever. Canadair. There are always new people asked me this a lot. Because obviously, this book is about some of the ways in which I think the gay community has changed. Let me say in reference to my book plague, a novel about healing, that the novel deals with a lot of spiritual issues. By spiritual I don't mean religious, I don't mean churchy. I think that spirituality is a very important part of human beings, all of us have a spiritual side of us, which maybe means that we can understand our lives in a larger context. We understand our lives in the context of Houston in the context of the United States in the context of the world. I think that's probably what spirituality is about. And God is just the name the symbol for the largest possible context. At any rate, I think that many gay people have ended up feeling themselves driven out of a spiritual perspective, because the people who can guide them monopoly on spirituality turned out to be awful, hateful people. When you look at somebody like Jimmy Swaggart who just preached hate and bitterness, if that's what spirituality is, well, obviously, I don't want any part of it. And a lot of us have said that, and unfortunately, I think in rethinking religion, we have to use the tried expressions, throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I, in all, the writing that I do, I am struggling to kind of create a positive spirituality, which might make sense to gay people,



08:30

especially since we've been programmed for so long to dislike what we are when you grow up, and you have to change that sort of like being reborn again, in a sense, isn't it?



08:41

Yes. You know, I just Randy Schultz in the mayor of Castro Street, made that parallel that there's a tremendous similarity between the gay liberation movement and the Christian fundamentalist movement. Both movements are convert begin with a great conversion experience. They go different directions after that, but hopefully, our conversion experience is a more loving one. And sometimes it is, sometimes unfortunately, it isn't. I think the AIDS crisis has come has made many of us again, more loving. It's called on us to look at a lot more human emotion than just sexual drive. We were talking about ways in which the gay community has changed because of AIDS. I brought up spirituality I always say I think the

reason that AIDS has forced us to ask spiritual questions, is because AIDS has involved us suddenly with life and death issues. The entire young age. Yes, very prematurely. We now you know, it is certainly true that we are suddenly our community is dying and facing death and those core issues much much earlier than our peers are around us. At the same time, you know human beings have usually most human beings have died by age 40. That's been the way human life was. Quite recently, medicine came along and said, Wait a minute, we can keep you alive until you're 60 7080 100 years old. A lot of those people who have cat who were staying alive that long are not they're not any better off, he had a set of vegetables in convalescent hospital. And we're having a new problem with what to do with these people. With the observations that I have, that I've often on made in stuff I've written is that I think it's interesting that AIDS hit my generation, I'm 42. Now, I call mice I call my generation, the first generation of liberated gay men. We were the group that were just coming to terms with our sexual adulthood at the time of Stonewall. And suddenly our lives were changed dramatically by liberation. It seems to me one of the things that I know that I said and that lots of my friends said back then, in the early 70s, when it was not at all when you know, when you couldn't trust anyone over 30, we said, I don't want to get old. I want to live fast. We have an intense, wonderful, rich life now. And die young before I end up old and whether lived in the fast lane is just exactly many game indeed live. Now, I think that AIDS has come about, in a tragic way, a terribly tragic, horrible way to fulfill that prophecy. And there's something ugly about the way it's happened. At the same time, I think that the memory of those kinds of thoughts back then want to tell us it may be dying at 40 is not such a bad thing. We did live a tremendously full life. Many of us lived a much fuller life, than if we had said, oh, what really matters most in this world is having a house with a two car garage and making sure that everything is stable and that I don't rock the boat. We want to



12:15

talk about the book itself. What is it about?



12:19

We all it's



12:21

it's plague. And it's published by Allison publications who have done an awful lot of gay titles. Yes.



12:27

Well, Alison has a very good publishing company. Unfortunately, of course, because Alison is a gay publisher. His books don't get the mass distribution as distribution, although I think that they come to the attention of our people. Much better. He does good promotion. I had two other books published previously by William Morrow company, which is one of these huge New York publishing firms that didn't do any promotion at all. So I'm not pleased with with Sasha Allison as well. But



12:56

we're also as I talked about last week on the show during the Visa Card cut up promotion for because of their stance on the Olympics. But anyway, let's talk about the novel.



13:07

I want to stress the subtitle is called a novel about healing, because the book really is about healing. It's about AIDS. But it is about how we might heal our attitudes about AIDS. I use that expression healing and specifically the expression attitudinal healing. I want to say that I, you know, I think that, in fact, when you change your attitude, we certainly see that some people who change their attitudes really get healthier. I think some people who are now HIV positive and who really haven't had any full blown, you know, any manifestation of AIDS symptoms, if they change their attitudes, if they reduce stress in their lives, maybe decide I want to live a simpler life, go out in the country and grow vegetables.



13:54

I think the statistics show that that the gay white male who more than likely would be in the gay family in the extended family of the community, to already live longer than some of the other minorities who don't have that support.



14:06

Right. So changing our lives, changing our attitudes helps us live longer. I think for people who have full blown disease, changing their attitude may give them a longer, better life, and certainly give them a good day. If I mean, we're all going to die anyway. People with AIDS may die a little sooner than the rest of us. I think they owe it to themselves to die. Well. I think it's a tragic thing, to to die a bad death. Unfortunately, you know, that poem of Dylan Thomas's, do not go gently into that good night, has gotten floated over and over again, rage, rage against the dying of the light, as though we shouldn't accept that as an actual part of our lives. I talked about spirituality a while ago was seeing things in a larger context. Another expression for that is it's seeing oneself in one's ecological niche. Part of one's ecological niche is dying, and we ought to be able to do that in a joyful way. So yeah, that's hard. That's



15:10

infection was probably the best way to convey your message.



15:14

Well, I think a lot of us are tired of reading about a, we just overwhelmed with all these messages about AIDS and news stories every day. Every book that comes out is dated immediately. I mean, they already there are things about this book that I would have written

differently, knowing what I know, now, I would have mentioned I 721. Which when I wrote this, I didn't know about well enough to talk about it. But it, it's for all that it's a tragic story. It's also a positive story, if it's a good hero story, so it ends with a happy ending. The hero in fact, in a interesting sort of way, brings about what seems to be a cure. So that by the time the novel is over setting a kind of hypothetical future age has been resolved, and a good cure has been found. And he's helped bring that about. It's a there's a romance, there's a straight couple and a gay couple. And it's not terribly sexual, but you are. In so many novels, we started pick them up just after sex when they're at their most romantic. I think it's a good story. It's got a there's a lot of age education stuff in it. And one of the criticisms I think it's probably a valid criticism is that the book has a little too much information. But frankly, I think that the the issue of AIDS is so important that we can't, we can't just do a needed venture spy story about it. We've got to use that story to convey important knowledge. Because people need knowledge, because knowledge is what we have to stop this disease. And we've seen it it works. The gay community really had in a very dramatic way stop the spread of AIDS among us, and as opposed to the government Muniz, state and city, which isn't doing much of anything. Absolutely. Which reminds me, of course of Randy sills, his book that he's out now and the band played on. In some ways. I think my novel really ends up being a drum dramatization of the same point that Randy made, that the government allowed aids to happen. It didn't just happen, it was allowed to happen. Well, I have fictionalized that, rather than you know, what Randy points out is it was the system, it was the way America thinks that allow this to happen. I gave that into the hands of a specific person with whom my major character could then have a dialogue and say, Wait a minute, you don't understand what gay life is about. You've misunderstood what homosexuality is, you've misunderstood what humanity is. But so I've got a kind of a bad guy who knows of a cure, and is sitting on it, waiting to allow the homosexuals to die off. Because believing is so many of the fundamentalist Christians do that homosexuals only reproduce by recruitment? Well, if you got rid of all the homosexuals, and they wouldn't be anybody to recruit, and the whole thing would just die out. Of course, that's not the reality at all, no matter how many others die off the the whole new crop of 10% of gay, gay, young people coming up right behind us. I think what's important, then, is how we face that reality that they have allowed this to happen. What I what I say finally, at the end of the book, and I think this is the message about healing, is that we have to forgive them. That doesn't mean just letting it happen. But I think that our then, you know, we are faced with the issue of do we get angry? Do we rage about this? Obviously, rage is an important part of, of coming out, there is an appropriate period of gay rage in the lives of all of us. We also have to direct that into into activism. And I don't know that that means belonging to gRPC. But maybe it does for some people, it certainly does.



19:11

Or the other 60 organizations in the switchboard, something I met, that does a lot of good also, if he says



19:18

it's working with people with AIDS, being compassionate, being loving people, I think that AIDS has one of the ways it's changed, as we said a minute ago is that we have become more loving people, we've become more conscientious. I think so those are sort of the messages that I put forward in the book, I hope in a way I did the whole message of the book is summarized in a sentence which my main character close to himself several times, which is a line from a novel

by Ursula Gwynn a kind of science fiction mystical writer. She has a beautiful novel called The Lathe of Heaven. And she says about her main character in the book, which is what my main character then thinks about. She says about He never spoke any bitterness at all, no matter how awful the things he said, Are there really people without resentment without hate, who never go crossgrain to the universe, who see evil and resist evil, but remain utterly unaffected by it. And I think that's what we need. We, our community right now is living in the midst of awful, awful things. And we learn we have to learn to not be bitter about that. Because if it does, it just ruins our lives.

20:33

But we do have a community. You know, we do you have a community, we have a strong community. And it may not be the majority of gay people are actually involved in the community. But the community that is here in place, in many ways, is a very loving community. In a way, I wish it was more effective, but it is effective. I mean, we have done a lot in this community, not only in Houston, but around the country. But there's still a lot more that we can do. We

20:57

really have solid aid. I mean, not not, not that AIDS is over. But we did what we we brought it to the attention we beat under doors of the government until they finally did something well I cut to his death helped a lot. That's what Randy points out in the band played on. If there had been no gay political activity, if there had been no gay activists, AIDS would have just ravaged all of us and nobody would have ever said anything about it because they the government, to fundamentalist Christians, were not going to be concerned that our homosexuals were dying off.

21:34

Okay. Well, I thank you very much for talking to our audience. The book is called plague, a novel about healing. It's by Toby Johnson. It's published by Allison publications and it's art. So wisdom here in the monetarism 11 O for California. And also available if you'd like to get some more information you can write to Allison and they're on. I believe it's Cambridge Street. Third Street in

22:01

Compton Street, Clinton will Bostonian sort of name ply MP to in number 40, Plimpton Street, Boston, Oh, 2118. Sasha Allison has a very nice brochure that he sends out catalog of gay material. If you write him at 40, Plimpton Street, Boston, oh, 2118, you can get on the mailing list. And you can order this directly from them. It's my 795 prices. So we can't mention the rate. But it is very reasonable for novel, and you combine it with wisdom. And that would be a good way to support you know, part of the gay community is supporting our own businesses, so



22:43

casinos around the Christmas season. So if you're looking to buy that present, this is a very good book to do it with. Thank you very much, Toby. Thank you.



J Jack Valinski 22:53

Dear Mr. Jesus, that's been playing on some of the commercial station. You know, Pacifica always has an answer to everything. And that sort of brings up the subject. And these are two subjects that we're going to run together about talking about the transmitter and about Christmas. Christmas is sometimes a sad time for many of us in the community. And the reason for that is is because we are not attached or we don't want to be attached to our biological family. And we have our sometimes our own extended family here in the community. And many times those people do go home for Christmas themselves. So some of us are left here alone. And this year, I'm going to admit that Christmas is