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SPEAKERS

Bruce Reeves, Harvey Milk



00:01

The following program contains language or images of a frank or sensitive nature that may be considered objectionable by some listener Discretion is Advised



00:14

I am what I am I am I special creation so come to give me the all the Ovation It's my little Bryden and it's not a place to hide lies not worth a damn to you can say



00:56

hi you've discovered after hours continuing tradition on KPFT



01:10

I don't want sprays I don't want bang my own drum some pretty bad things from a dip Dawn life is a sham to you and shout out what I am what I need no excuse to do my own deck sometimes he is known as no deposit damn till you can shout out



Harvey Milk 02:31

we must destroy the Miss ROI shatter them we must continue to speak out and most importantly most importantly every day versus now you must tell your immediate family you must tell your relatives you must tell your friends if indeed they are your friends you must tell your neighbors you must tell the people your work you must tell the people in the story they realize that we are indeed the children that we are indeed everywhere every every lie every innuendo will be destroyed so much better



03:55

used to do my own deck some time.



04:41

You may all come out. Where will you be when they come?



Bruce Reeves 05:48

KPFT Houston. Sorry about that, folks. We went off the air again. But we're back home. We're just gonna play some more music for a while. It is Black History Month. We're celebrating that today. And we'll be celebrating it all month. My name is Bruce Reeves. I'm the host for after hours here on KPFT. And we hope you'll bear with us tonight we are here again having transmission problems. We've had some electrical problems and then we actually have some physical problems with their transmitter. So we are transmitting tonight at reduced power. So bear with us. We're going to be playing a lot of music tonight from black artist. Because it is Black History Month, we will hopefully be trying to do an interview segment with Perry Watkins, who was the black sergeant in the Army who was drafted he told them when he was drafted, he was gay. They drafted him anyway. And every time he re upped he told them he was gay and they re upped him anyway. And then they decided to get rid of him because he was gay. So he went all the way to the US Supreme Court of US District Court of Appeals district five and was basically reinstated. That was about a year and a half ago. So we're gonna have that interview coming up in a little bit. Right now. We're gonna play some more music. So stick with us tonight we are having some problems, but hopefully the show will get on without too many more hitches. Thanks a lot. And you're listening to after hours on KPFT 90.1 FM in Houston. We are having some transmitter problems this evening. We hope that you will bear with us. The song we were just listening to is forever gay with a sotto Sant and John. And so we hope you enjoyed that. We are trying to play some music this evening from black gay and lesbian artist. And we're going to be playing some additional music from black artists that aren't necessarily gay and lesbian but music that has things to say to our community. We are going to be doing an interview and just a few minutes. Actually, it's a it's a taped interview. One of them that was done with Perry Watkins two years ago and the other one that was a follow up after he won his court battle in November of 1990. So those are gonna be coming up in just a few minutes. The next time we're gonna be playing is by the artist Nona Hendricks and she's a black by artist. And the song is called I Know What You Need.



08:40

Staff Sergeant Perry J. Watkins is making gay history. On February the 10th 1988. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled tuned to one in favor of Perry Watkins in the case of Watkins versus the United States Army. If upheld, it would be the first time in the history of the US judicial system that gays were granted protection of their rights. Over the past seven years, civil rights activist Perry Watkins has committed himself to the fight not only for his own rights, but the rights of all homosexuals. Melinda Tamayo interviewed Perry as he was

being honored by the Los Angeles gay and lesbian community services center. Sadly, the same day the interview was being done. Another game military hero Leonard Mettler, which died from AIDS complications.



09:41

Well, in 1967, I told the military that I was gay. They drafted me anyway, I requested discharge three times within the first six months of my enlistment. They said no, because we can't prove you've ever committed a homosexual act. So therefore you have to remain in 1975. The military gave me a deal Charge board that unanimously said no, I should be retained because I did nothing that was detrimental to unit morale mission accomplishment, or my own job performance. And then in 1981, that same military came back and said, Oh, we're sorry, you told us you were gay in 1967. We now have to put you out, at which point I took them to court. Actually, I took them to court before that. But we've been in court for the last seven years fighting this case, and just in February ruling was handed down by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, that gays do constitute a suspect class, and that the Army Regulation, barring reenlistment of homosexuals is unconstitutional. And they've now decided to rehear that on BOC, which means 11, justices are going to hear it and make a decision. And so therefore, we're now waiting for that rehearing date to come up.



10:49

That's some stories. Yeah, let me go back here for a minute. Let me go back to a minute here.



10:56

When you want to re enlist was your homosexuality brought up again



11:02

at that time, that was an issue that was constantly being discussed in the military, for example, the initial reason I went to court was because they revoked my security clearance. However, it wasn't the first time the army had revoked my security clearance. This was the fifth time the army had revoked it. And every single time they did exactly the same thing. They said, We're going to revoke your security clearance because you're gay. And I said, Fine, you go right ahead. Then they would wait about a month and a half and come back and say to me, Well, since you're an admitted homosexual, you're not a security risk. So therefore, you can have your clearance back and I will say, Fine, thank you. And I will go ahead and continue to work. Well, the fifth time they did this, I was tired of the crap. So I wrote a letter of rebuttal, which the army absolutely refused to answer for over a year and a half. They gave me absolutely no response. The minute I took them to court to get my security clearance back, they then decided that, oh, well, since you're gay, you can't be in the army. So therefore, we have to put you out.



12:00



11:59

This is all documented.



12:02

Yes. Definitely. Without about



12:05

why do you know why this happened for nine years? You were the service? You were? No, no, for 15 years? I'm sorry. 15 years you were in the service? Yes. You were an exemplary soldier. According to them. They knew that you were homosexual. Yes. So why did they pick you to stay? What happened? In other words,



12:32

they put everyone else out who's gay? Why did they let me stay? Probably someone with very good brains simply looked at my recommendations and things and said, Well, yes, there's no reason for this man to be put out. That's the only thing I can think they simply did what needed to be done. They judge me as an individual, as a soldier and judge me on my merits and my capabilities, rather than by a stupid, idiotic regulation.



12:57

Well, that's a very nice way to think of it. Certainly, yeah. It's a very Yes. non judgmental way to make



13:04

sure they judge me like they do any other soldier. If I was doing the job. They said, Fine, you can stay what you're doing in your private life makes no difference. Until some idiots in the Pentagon decided, Oh, well, no, we don't want to do this and started ordering the officers on my bass to put me out. And that's just what they did. And that's exactly what they told me. So I'm only repeating what they said. So if that's wrong, that's their problem. At this point. Today, it is in court again. Yes. And what we're, what is the status of the case right now? Well, it's not going to be reheard on bond, which means that the initial ruling was handed down by a three judge panel. And I'm back ruling means that nonbank hearing means that 11 justices from the Ninth Circuit will be seated, and they will listen to the oral arguments and then vote as to whether or not exactly what kind of ruling they want to make. Now they can either uphold that ruling, they could totally throw that ruling out. They could rule totally in favor of the military, they could rule totally in my favor based on totally different grounds. So it just basically means that the case is now still basically on the appeal status that it was before except for now instead of being hurt by three judges that will be hurt by 11.





14:17

Incredible which have to go through. This has brought you today why you're here. And now you're wearing let's talk about this pin you're wearing. It's got a pink triangle. And this what is this in the pink triangle?



14:29

That's a sergeant the sixth type that was my rank when I was in the army. And it says rebel with a cause with the cause. Yes, rebel with a cause is a nonprofit foundation that has engaged me as their keynote speaker to send me on a nationwide tour to discuss civil rights, homosexual rights and homosexuals in the military. Basically, we're fighting for all civil rights. It's not just really a gay rights issue anymore. One of our basic themes is just kind of the same thing we think Your to Reagan has given us so much as as victims of this society that we wanted to give something back to him. So our basic theme is zero tolerance and discrimination is simply isn't acceptable regardless of what level you put it on.



15:14

So obviously now your career, you're going to be an activist, aren't you? Like an activist. That's it.



15:21

That's it. For 15 years my career was was defending this country, the rights that citizens of this country are supposed to have. And now my career is going to be seeing to it that we do get those rights.



15:44

November 5 Supreme Court decision has finally ended black openly gay Sergeant Perry Watkins war against the US Army. Judith Gabriel has the details.



15:53

The US Supreme Court let stand a ruling that the army cannot bar the reenlistment of a gay soldier whose sexual orientation they had known about for several years. The high court's order represented victory for Perry Watkins, a 14 year veteran who was discharged and denied re enlistment. A US Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled last year that the army acted improperly. It said the army knew he was gay when he re enlisted three other times what consumed to regain security clearance from the military authorities. James Levin's represents the 41 year old soldier,



16:30

they would give it to him because he was a great soldier and he needed it in order to do the jobs that his local commanding officers wanted him to do. And then somebody else would look at regulation. And they would say, well, we can't give a secret level security clearance to somebody who's gay and then we take it away again.



16:45

Well then said the army excuse for denying his client security clearance made little sense.



16:50

They have a tendency to try out the argument that a homosexual can be blackmailed. But that only has any credibility if it's a homosexual person who doesn't openly acknowledge his sexual orientation if he does and always has, how can he be blackmailed about it?



17:10

attorney James Levin's. The High Court's action fails to resolve the larger question about whether the military ban on gays is a form of discrimination.



17:20

That report from Judas Gabriel. This way as Christopher David Trentham spoke with Sergeant Watkins about his long road to victory.



17:27

When Perry Watkins first learned that the United States Supreme Court had upheld the lower court's ruling that the army must allow him to re enlist. One of the first thoughts that went through his mind was what he always told people when they wants to know why he had answered yes, when he was asked by the army, if he was a homosexual, when he first signed up. The reason



17:47

I checked the box, yes, is because my mother would kill me if I lied. And when my attorney told me that they weren't going to hear the case, and it was all over and I had one, one of the first thoughts that went through my mind was thank God I did for my mother said, it's really kind of ironic how you know, if you're given good values, regardless of whether you're gay or lesbian, or whether you're not gay or lesbian, it tends to pay off in the long run.



18:13

Watkins sees this decision as a general victory for lesbian and gay rights, even though the narrow issue of his particular case probably won't have any immediate effect on the military's current policy, even though



18:25

we addressed the issue of the regulation and stated that we felt the regulation was unfair not to be thrown out. When the judges decided to rule they chose not to address that issue at all. So the only issue they did address was the issue of equitable estoppel, which is basically an issue of breach of promise. I think it's very important that gays and lesbian remember that gay lesbian rights are not special rights. And when you specifically state gay and lesbian rights, it makes it really easy target. For anyone who was opposed to that to say, well, you're gonna you're asking for special treatment, you're asking for special treatment. But when the reason for for your rights being granted or for your rights being upheld, is not the fact that you're gay or lesbian. But the simple fact that any American citizen deserves fair treatment, it really has a much broader effect.



19:12

Having spent 15 years in the Army, one of Watkins priorities is rejoining the army in order to secure the retirement benefits. He worked so hard to earn.



19:23

My attorney of course, getting all the necessary paperwork and stuff needed a writ of mandate from the Ninth Circuit. And then of course, we have to go back and approach the military as to what it is they're going to do and how they plan to handle all of that. So whatever it takes to get my retirement is what I plan to do as soon as I possibly can.



19:39

Watkins feels that this decision will increase the pressure to change the military's policy of excluding gays and lesbians, and he feels that individual and group action by members of the lesbian and gay community will accelerate that process.



19:54

There are a lot of organizations out there that are specifically working on that issue most of your gay and lesbian veteran's organizations are doing so there's now a national, gay, lesbian and bisexual Veterans of America organization of which Miriam Islam is the chairperson currently. And they're making a very concerted effort to motivate campuses that have ROTC to notify the Department of Defense to the left, they stopped their discriminatory policy against gays and lesbians, they can no longer recruit on their campuses, Congress can actually eliminate this policy. So I think combat a congressman would be good, preferably in writing. Any other elected officials that you know of you can you can get in touch with and of course,

George Bush could eliminate the whole policy with a stroke of a pen. But writing a letter to George Bush is probably just about as effective as bottling it up and throwing it into the Colorado River, because he probably would pay little to no attention to it. In the face of this, along with the reports that were put out last year, on the study that the Pentagon commission is getting more and more ludicrous as to why we have this stupid policy. I think you're really seeing the beginning of the



21:03

reporting from Los Angeles, this is Christopher David Trentham for this way out.

B

Bruce Reeves 21:11

Jeremy, are you queer, and that was Josie. Somebody anyway. And before that we heard the only way is up. And that was by yas. And it's Gay History Month, you're listening to after hours I continuing traditional and KPFT 90.1 FM. And we had an interview earlier with that was taped. Well, part of it was taped two years ago. And part of it was taped about a year ago with Perry Watkins and his battle with the US government to get reinstated as, say, a sergeant in the US Army. And he was very successful in doing that. And so it just goes to show that there are homosexuals in the army, and they know it and they can do nothing about it. In some cases anyway. So that was really kind of neat. And, of course, the I guess the Forgotten scouts organization is a group we talked about last week, and I didn't get here this week with the address. But we have that information. If you need the the address for the Forgotten scouts group, we can get that to you. The Forgotten scouts is an organization founded in California, and is becoming the national organization to try to find all of the people who are or have men or may someday be Boy Scouts. And that are also gay because we'd like to get the national office to change their policy that says you can be as skilled anymore, because of course we all know that once a scout, always a scout. And so today is a very special day for scouting as well. It Scout Sunday yesterday was Scout Sabbath. So it's a special time for home. No, you're not on I'll turn you on. We got everybody here today. Well, almost everybody. I've



23:12

always wanted you to turn me on.

B

Bruce Reeves 23:15

Judy's here, Jules here. Finally finally. overslept, and we are having some transmitter problems. Tonight. We're at 40% power, and hopefully that problem will be fixed in a day or two. But hopefully we're back on the air to stay for a while. That would be nice. The station was off the air for about three and a half hours tonight. But boy scouts, and Boy Scouts is a very, I have a question. Okay.



23:46

What is Boy Scouts Sabbath?

What is Boy Scouts Sabbath?

B

Bruce Reeves 23:48

Boy Scout Sabbath? Well, scouting in this country was started in February of 1911. And so the first Sunday is Scout Sunday, and Boy Scouts all across the nation that are they go to churches that operate on Sunday, have little meetings in their churches to get their awards and make their presence known. And the Jewish scouts have Scout Sabbath, which is the first Saturday, but actually it's the day before Scout Sunday, which this year also happens to be the first Saturday in February but

A

24:30

that's nice. It works out that well. We'll have to forgive my ignorance. I was never a boy scout in any fashion.

B

Bruce Reeves 24:36

But so anyway, the Forgotten Scout organization was formed about six months ago. They're in the process of getting their 501 C three status so that their donations can be tax deductible. But their basic purpose is to try to get the Boy Scouts of America to change their policy that that's discriminatory at against gay and lesbian people, because many people that are scouts or have been scouts, and I'm one of those I was an Eagle Scout. I was in scouts for 11 years I guess as a child of three years in cubs and eight years as a boy scout. Assistant Scoutmaster for four years while I was in college, I was a scout leader for another three and a half years until I was asked to leave because I was one of those people.

A

25:30

Kind of sounds like that military story all over again.

B

Bruce Reeves 25:32

Yeah. And so I'm not involved in Scouting anymore, but I would, would enjoy it. I know when, when I was involved in scouting, it was it was very special to me, it was very special to be a part of a group that was helping boys, young boys, and I really feel like looking back on my scouting career. Back then scouting was one of those places where I fit in, and I didn't really fit anywhere else. But in scouts i i was looked up to by a lot of the other Scouts because I was very good at scouting.

A

26:10

I thought that was good. You were tall.



26:13

Yeah, him well. Yeah, I was just trying to imagine him in



26:17

like a cheap advertisement.



Bruce Reeves 26:19

But he was scouting was a place where I really fit in and looking back on my days in scouting. I think the national average of one in 10 people being gay. Probably doesn't hold true for scouting. I would say in scouting, it's probably a lot higher percentage than that winning 10s not certainly not higher, it's probably more like five of 10 or seven of 10.



26:46

Well, isn't there some kind of a grandson or something involved in all of this fall row,



Bruce Reeves 26:51

the founder of scouting was Mr. Baton Powell. And he started scouting in 1907, I believe in England Mariota. And he actually had worked with with young boys in, in the down under countries, I think he worked in Australia and in Africa, and some English was he sounds territories before he moved back to England and started scouting. And it is fairly well touted these days that Mr. Ben Powell himself was a homosexual. So it's, it's interesting to me that the founder of scouting wouldn't be allowed to eat up in his own organization today. But his grandson is alive and living in this wonderful country and is a homosexual. And he's one of the members of the Forgotten Scouts because he too, feels that his grandfather would not bar him from being in this organization. The unfortunate part is the policy isn't just for leaders. It's for the scouts as well. If a if someone who's between the ages of 11 and 18, is known to be homosexual. They're technically not allowed to be a scout,



28:14

who's leading this group. Now, McCarthy I mean, what's it like some little seven year old walks around, he flips his wrist by accident, and he can't get into this gap is that? How can you be a real known homosexual at that age? I mean, give me a break.



Bruce Reeves 28:28

Because that sexual look again? Yeah, yeah. Well, and it's, again, I'm not sure how that's working. Of course, all this came about because Tim Curran who lived in I was in California, I think he was in the Los Angeles area wanted to be in scouting. And California has a just a non

think he was in the Los Angeles area, wanted to be in scouting. And California has a just a non-discriminatory clause for the state, which includes sexual orientation. So the boyscout said, That's the future 5501



29:07

C standards through the state you have to be non to



Bruce Reeves 29:14

discriminatory so and in California, that includes sexual orientation, right? So he took them to court because they said, You can't be a scout leader. And he basically won. Basically, what happened? Well, actually, he didn't really win. There was it was I think he lost in the first battle, but the second battle is still going on. But it's it's really it's one of those strange lines between Is this a public organization or a private organization? And the organization was founded by an act of Congress, and it was chartered by Congress in 1911. So it's technically a national public organization.



29:58

The biggest problem was something like that is Whether you win or lose, do you really win or lose because once you've had that much, and that kind of publicity, I don't care what's going on, parents are not going to willingly walk into a situation like that with their kids, whether their kids are gay, or they know it or don't know it or whatever, whatever, regardless of the age, parents aren't going to be real excited about letting their kids into that particular group if he is a leader, so he really loses whether he wins or not.



Bruce Reeves 30:25

That may be and it may not be because I think in California, you're gonna find that most people are open minded enough and they know enough gay people because most of the gay people in the especially in the Los Angeles area are very much out of the closet. And I think, yeah, they'd have to pay a sign up on fishing. I don't I don't think it would be that big of an ordeal. And basically, what happened with me in Louisiana was I was initially accused by one of the kids of being a gay person, and I told him that I was



31:04

accused or I asked, asked, Well accused as a real has a real strange connotation, especially in this area.



Bruce Reeves 31:12

Accused asked there wasn't much difference. And any case, his father was the troop committee chair. And, you know, I basically told the kid that I really didn't think it had any bearing on my

doing with a scout troop, but that I understood why he would ask the question and hope that he understood what I was saying. At that point, I basically called the Scoutmaster and said, I would like to resign. The Scoutmaster wanted to know why. So I told him, he already knew why. Because the troop committee chair had already talked to him. And he basically told me that he didn't think it was an issue that should be an issue, that he didn't think it should be a problem, and that he would like me to stay involved with the troop. And I can send it to do that. And about a week later, he called me back and said he had done some more thinking about it. And had changed his mind primarily because of the abuse the kids could take. If other kids that weren't in the scout troop said, you know, hey, here's your scoutmasters clan, you know, you must be too



32:37

lame.



32:39

Um,



32:40

how long have this boy been in your group?



Bruce Reeves 32:44

He was in the group when I moved to Baton Rouge



32:46

and all of a sudden it was a problem. I wonder how long it took daddy to coach him to ask the question for him.



Bruce Reeves 32:53

Well, he asked the question when he came over one day and found my lover and I cuddling on the couch. But such as life so anyway, I at that point, I had already decided that the time was coming when I was going to have to resign because of my sexuality, and I did. But it was probably one of the hardest things I ever had to give up. It's something I've missed a great deal. I know when I was Scoutmaster, the troop here in Houston. For right at three years I was Scoutmaster of a troop out in the Westbury area. And we had 14 to 16 kids. We had two or three assistant scoutmasters, one of which was my boss at the time.





33:43

I've heard stories of his group here in Houston and believe me, he wasn't a Scoutmaster. He was a drill sergeant.

B

Bruce Reeves 33:49

And but it was, I love those kids, like they were my own. You know, it was, it was wonderful to have a family of 14 kids once a week. And once a month, I'd spend a weekend with them. But, you know, it was it was really a rewarding experience to me to watch them grow. And, and about, I guess about 70% of my trip was black. And that was really my first experience to work with a large group of black people at all. I learned a lot about cultures. We had an Indian kid in the troop, and I learned some about his culture as well. It was it was a fascinating experience because I was I was learning probably as much about them as they were learning about knots and camping and it was really a trip I can imagine. But anyway, the Forgotten scouts organization is is trying to get that policy changed. If that's information that you think If that's a group you think you'd like to be a member of, give us a call and get will leave us your phone number and we'll give you a call back with that address. We'll try to make sure we have that address with us next week when we're here and we're going to go to some music we've got a Bronski beat and this song is called Why