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transsexual, people, gender, hear, interviews, folks, stereotype, surgery, tonight, terms, told, male, sex, transgender, sex reassignment surgery, galveston, tape, women, hours, female

SPEAKERS

Jimmy Carper, Sarah Dipalma

J

Jimmy Carper 00:07

The following program contains language or images of a frank or sensitive nature which may be considered objectionable by some listener discretion is advised. Oh yes, you've tuned into after hours are continuing tradition on KPFT Houston 90.1 FM. The crew of after hours is ready to bring you news, interviews and music geared for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people. Hear it after hours, we may be diverse, but we have one thing in common. We are all out of the closet and urge everyone to come out of their closets. That means standing up for yourself, taking responsibility for your own life and being proud of who you are. Realistically, we know not everyone can do that because of a job or frame of mind. That's okay. We're here for you too. So sit back, relax, and enjoy this week's edition of after hours. Well,

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Sarah Dipalma 02:05

good evening. Welcome to After hours a continuing tradition in Houston

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Jimmy Carper 02:10

right here on KPFT. Houston. I'm Jimmy Carper.

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Sarah Dipalma 02:14

Now I'm Sara De Palma. Glad to be in out of the cold.

J

Jimmy Carper 02:19

What happened who left the refrigerator door open?

S Sarah Dipalma 02:22

This is gonna be tough coming back from Hawaii

J Jimmy Carper 02:24

is it is well, I've been back a week you can see that the tan is fading already.

S Sarah Dipalma 02:29

Folks. He's sitting here he's looking tan he's looking adorable. It life must really be tough. You know? I mean, life is rough on you.

J Jimmy Carper 02:37

I have a wonderful lover of 16 and a half years and he's home in bed right now. Of course he goes to bed early every night. But he drugged me off to Hawaii kicking and screaming against my will for my birthday. And I'm finally back.

S Sarah Dipalma 02:54

And I offered to go in in Jimmy's luggage you know, I'm a short person I would have made carry on luggage but no, no. He goes to Hawaii without me. I don't believe we've got a terrific show tonight. I've been planning for the show for three months. We are going to be bringing you Dr. Collier Cole who is the director of the Rosenberg clinic in Galveston. And we are going to be bringing you interviews with many of the women who were at a get together it was actually this was actually taped in December.

J Jimmy Carper 03:30

And what was the get together? Um

S Sarah Dipalma 03:33

it's a little hard to explain but it's a get to get to like an alumni gets okay. Okay usually has an on the same weekend that the dickens on the strand is held. And they hold another one Oh, midsummer. And it's kind of a get together. It's a peer support kind of thing. And it's really, it's very interesting, because you'll meet women there who were at the start of this process of being a transsexual, some who were 15 years down the line after surgery. You meet people there who are 18 and on their way to surgery, and people who are 55 and on their way to search your cash. Just it's it's very cross section. Yeah. Anybody who thinks that they really know what transsexual czar, she should really have an opportunity to go to one of these because they're it's an amazing thing. And I was very, very, very honored that Dr. Cole was

willing to do that for us. I really consider that to be a sign of faith on his part. So I hope he finds that. I hope he feels happy with what he hears this evening. In fact, I guess might as well talk a little bit about that. Our show tonight is ostensibly about transsexuals who we are, how we arrived at the decision to change our gender and what that has meant to us. But really, the show this evening is about all of us as human beings. What do we really know about ourselves as males or females? Why do we accept our dictate? had behaviors without question and what would happen if we challenged them? transsexuals are uniquely qualified to discuss this question because we have lived in both sides of the issues. If you are a regular listener to our show, you've already heard me talk about the perceived differences in the ways males and females are treated based on my own personal experience. Tonight, you will hear other voices give their perspectives based on their experiences without interruption. There won't be any Geraldo here tonight making any sort of odd faces, where we aren't going to have guests placed on a panel for the sole purpose of creating heat while shedding no light on the subject. What you will hear tonight is a rarity in broadcasting. I hope you will find it interesting and informative. I also want to thank Dr. Collier, CO the director of the Rosenberg clinic in Galveston. I'm told that he rarely does interviews with anyone. I took the fact that he agreed to do our show is a sign of trust, and I hope he'll feel like his trust has been rewarded. I especially want to thank him for arranging the interviews with the women you will hear tonight. And of course, I think the women who agreed to tell their stories. A few of the women had met me before, but most had never heard of me until the day the interviews were recorded. They told their stories with the belief that as a transsexual myself, I would present them honestly and fairly. And I've made every effort to do exactly that. So I hope they also be pleased with the results. I also want to welcome the first time listeners to our show. I'm well aware there has been a great deal of discussion in the transgender community about the program this evening. Many of you have told me that due to the hour of our show, you will be listening for the first time. Others have told me they're setting their VCRs and tape recorders for playback the next day, no matter when or where you are hearing us. Welcome to the show. And we hope you'll come back and listen again. I also brought looks like a library in here tonight. We've got source material from all over the place. We I've got several books in here, I brought the agenda Bill of Rights, which is put together by Phyllis Fry's organization. The one thing I do want to ask everybody tonight is to keep an open mind. No matter what you think, you know, about transsexuals? The reason these people have been selected for these for the airing tonight is because they all present a different viewpoint, I had several hours of tape that's been boiled down to about 70 minutes. And there are going to be some people who will be listening tonight who interviewed with me who will not hear themselves on the tape. That's not a reflection of the worth of the interview. It's more a statement of I wanted to get a broad range of views. And so I've done I've made every effort tonight to try and present as wide spectrum of views and opinions as I could. And that's how these interviews ended up being on the show tonight. We're probably going enough on tape to do a second or third show. Oh, really wanted to

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Jimmy Carper 08:08

I'm sure I've heard some of the tape already. And I'll tell you, since you've become a permanent part of after hours, I've really had to reevaluate my entire thinking I used to think I was I was I was pretty forward thinking. But since knowing you, Sarah, I've had to rethink everything about gender. Totally.

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Sarah Dipalma 08:36

Well, it's him. I went and spoke to a class at the University of Houston this past this past Wednesday. And they asked for a definition of, of gender. And I said, well, first of all, sex is the label that's put upon you at birth. Gender is all the expectations that come from having been labeled in every John that class dropped. Oh, I don't know what the definition. I don't know what definition they had been given by their professor, but it was obviously not the same. And I guess it's the it's it comes from having been on both sides of the fence, he started to develop a different view of it. I was really struck as I listened to the interviews at the way people have taken the same challenge and approached it in a completely different way. Yes. That that's really amazing to me, and the strength and why not?

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Jimmy Carper 09:35

Why not? It's really changing my thinking of the the pink and blue boy girl all of that kind of stuff. Even though I may have thought I was I was forward in thinking that oh, I'm a gay man. So I I'm well aware of my feminine side and I'm not afraid to show feelings. I'm a piker. compared to what I've been learning, well, I

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Sarah Dipalma 10:02

wouldn't wish what we have to go through. And anybody, you know, because it's so tough on family, I can't remember it really is so tough on family. But one of the questions that was asked while I was out of the class was, am I happy now? And I was able to look them in the eye and say, I'm happier now than I've ever been at any point in my life. Isn't that the most important thing? You know? And so I guess you can say, Well, this has all been worth it. I was really struck with the interviews, some of the interviews, that that the strength of these people, they they range in all ages, one of the women had her one of the women on the interviews tonight, he had her surgery at 19. Another person that you'll hear tonight is 50 something and is just now preparing for surgery. Wide Range span. The women that were they were there, you'll hear tonight they are they're black, they're white, they're Hispanic. They're middle aged, they're young. They're bankers, they're small business people, they that some of them have served in the military, many other

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Jimmy Carper 11:07

stereotype. I listened to a tape of myself when you first came on to after hours, and I made the comment that my stereotype of a transgendered person was the painted up poker. Right? And I've heard in this tape you talking to somebody about that? Yeah. And that, that you're saying? I don't know anybody? Transgender. How did this stereotype come about? Yeah, I don't know. I don't know. I've been trying to figure that out myself. That it's part of my reevaluating everything that I've ever thought,

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Sarah Dipalma 11:46

well, I have a theory about it. If you if you want to see how the stereotype came about, go out to cuties right now. And you can see this, you can see those stereotypes. Okay, bar, okay. Unfortunately, that's the only stereotype a lot of people get to see it's a lot like the gay pride

parade. The television cameras, always, always, always focus on somebody, a drag

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Jimmy Carper 12:12

queen with with a beard with the beard, or somebody with their butt hanging out of leather chaps. Right.

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Sarah Dipalma 12:17

And somehow that's assumed to be representative of the gay and lesbian community. Well, of course, that's nonsense. Just like just like the people in cuties. They're not us. They Yes, in Dr. Cole. I think since then, on the tape, there's a small group of people that do fit that category. But the vast majority of us have to work for a living. Yeah. And we're not we're not hugging the streets, honey with a lot of us would have to pay the jobs and that would never work.

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Jimmy Carper 12:44

So, but when you get right down to it, it's like everybody has the sameness of you have you have to make a living have to have a place to stay. Want to have a partner, and friends. I mean, isn't that the kind of the common bond we all have. And when it comes right down to it,

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Sarah Dipalma 13:04

my life partner and I kind of joke about it, because an exciting night around our house is when we get the dishes done soon enough to watch television. So much for being big time transgender. It's just a normal life. I mean, really, really, it is. And I really, I hope that you will hear that in the interviews tonight. I also want to say hello to the folks that are hearing us, outside of Houston tonight in San Francisco, in Washington, on college campuses around that are hearing us on tape. I want to say hello to the folks that have been writing to me on the internet and asking for copies of the show. Oh, great. We have we have really been getting out to places. I am also proud to say that fairly soon, we will no longer be the only transgendered show in the country. No kidding. We have finally spun off our first show in Boston. Wow. And I understand that some of the folks in San Francisco are working with KPFA right now to get their own show. Great. See,

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Jimmy Carper 14:07

I made the announcement at a at a programmers meeting here at KPFT Houston that we were the first radio station in the United States to give a permanent voice to the transgender community and I'm really, really proud to be able to do that.

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Sarah Dipalma 14:23

I'm proud I'm proud that we're able to do it and I'm proud that we're starting to have an effect

in other cities. You know, the people in Boston heard about us by word of mouth. The next thing you know they had asked for a copy of the tape. Well, they took a copy of a tape and they took it to a program director the program director liked it the next thing you know they have their own show. Great you know, right so this is why we're really getting big stuff done in Houston. This is this is exciting. You know, I really is where you think we go some music.

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Jimmy Carper 14:52

I have a piece of music that I've been wanting to play because it's a piece of music I played on after hours for quite a few years by bisexual Will artist no no Hendrix, and I've rethought this piece of music since knowing you, Sarah. I used to think it was about a strong woman personality. And and now you listen to this and you told me what you may think of Okay? Okay. It's called women who fly.

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Sarah Dipalma 15:23

You know, I really do like that. But actually the the, the women, the woman who makes me fly is sitting at home right now listening to the show. Ah, she didn't she knows. She knows I mean that. So

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Jimmy Carper 15:43

I actually want to, I mean, one can see when the two of you together that there's some there's something there.

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Sarah Dipalma 15:48

You know, I wasn't going to go back into activism I had after after my my fight with Texas a&m that really took it out of me. Had to go back and go all the way to the Supreme Court, it was just too much and I, I left a&m and said, I'm never getting back into activism. Again. I'm burnt out. I'm sick of it. And delegate that last, it lasted until my wife partner convinced me that I probably needed to go back into it. And I've been glad that she has, I admit that I get real tired. And you but it's true. And so I I have to thank her. And she's really who makes me fly. Let's talk about this interview with Dr. Cole. Okay, before we go to it, I do think there's some background, some history, and even some definition of terms that are needed. First of all, there is a mis impression among people, the transsexuals are united in a central belief of being trapped in the wrong body. And not another misconception says that all transsexuals are pointed at the final goal of sex reassignment surgery, and the attainment of this goal dictates what happens to transsexuals after the surgery is completed. Well, the facts are that the politics of transsexuality ranges from conservatives who wish to assimilate into society and disappear to radicals who reject the concept of gender altogether? The Conservatives consider surgery to be the answer. While the radicals often view surgery is giving into a system that defines gender and the behaviors associated with it as oppressive and even repulsive. Between these two extremes, there are viewpoints from every spot on the continuum. Now I'm not trying to confuse you. What I am trying to do is make you aware that viewing transsexuals is a monolith, with one single viewpoint is inaccurate. There's also a growing movement of people who

believe that behavior and gender codes based on whether one has a penis or a vagina is wrong. These people often decide to live as members of the opposite gender without surgery. And they are known as transgender it's think of this group is forming a middle ground between the two extremes. And you have the essential framework in which the debate over the proper role of sex reassignment surgery is currently taking place. When Christine Jorgensen had her what was then called sex change surgery in 1953. Her surgeon's name was Christian hamburger. Just as a general point of information, Christine actually named herself after her surgeon. Dr. Hamburger was Jen was widely credited with popularizing the idea that transsexuals are, quote, persons with a fundamental feeling of being victims of a cruel mistake, a consequence of a female personality in a male body, and quote, it's worth noting that he did not consider the possibility that male personalities could live in a female body. With that statement. It was about the same time that Harry Benjamin considered the father of transsexualism, coined the phrase that has become the motto for those who advocate surgery. If the mind cannot be changed to fit the body, then perhaps we should consider changing the body to fit the mind. In 1973, Norman Fiske introduced the term gender dysphoria, and it was just it was aimed at covering a wide range of applicants who are seeking sex reassignment surgery. He intended to be more inclusive than the term transsexual, but his term was called Gender Dysphoria syndrome. And it included I'm using his own words now, so don't shoot me, included transexuals, transvestites, homosexuals, and some psychotics who desires sex reassignment surgery. One, how long ago was this 1973 Oh, and now as you might guess, a lot of transgender activists strongly object to their gender dysphoria. And the reason being is that it makes transsexualism a personal problem rather than a cultural issue. In effect, it makes transsexualism a disease to be cured, rather than a behavior that exists on a continuum of natural occurrences. Now, in the interview, you're about to hear Dr. Cole will talk about Harry Benjamin, the society named after him, and many other issues related to transsexualism. No matter where a person stands on the continuum of transgender politics, there is no denying that his work and those on his staff have helped untold number of people find their answer and a place of peace. There were work with transsexuals and their family members has provided and is continuing to provide a vital service to our community, and we will be much poorer without it. We have an unusual treat for you with after hours this evening. We're going to be speaking with Dr. Cole. That's Dr. Cole is the director of the Rosenberg clinic in Galveston. And this interview comes about, at least in part from questions that you all have been calling in to us. I know I am not qualified to answer the questions. So I thought it would be a good idea to talk to someone who is Dr. Cole, welcome to ampere hours. And thank you for doing the interview with us.



21:37

Yes, sir. Good evening. It's my pleasure to be here.



Sarah Dipalma 21:40

When we start out by asking some of the questions that have been asked been put to me. I've been told by several people in the gay lesbian community that transsexuals are really people who can't deal with their own sexuality. When I go and talk to classes at various universities, they tell me the same thing. So let's start by talking about the confusion, saving, address the differences between gender identity and sexual orientation.



22:04

Okay, what we're really talking about here, Sarah are several issues and, and those issues do involve sexuality. And specifically, we're talking about gender identity, gender role, and one sexual orientation. Now, what those break down into is that gender identity is that personal private sense of being male or female. That's something that each individual has a sense of, it's largely biological in origin. It's a very personal sense or private sense of one's sexuality. When we're talking about gender role, those things are learned. We grow up in a society, we're exposed to a lot of cultural issues, television, friends, parents, churches, and so on. And we learn how to act like men how to dress like men how to act like women, dress like women, and so on. And the third issue is that of sexual orientation. Again, most experts tend to believe today that that may well be largely biological in origin. And that has to do with, with who you're attracted to, for, for sexual activity for sexual expression. So each of those areas need to be addressed and need to be discerned. Now, when you're talking about basically gay, lesbian people, these are folks whose identity is pretty comfortable, let's say with the male, homosexual, he's anatomically male, his identity is male, he learns how to act like a man, that satisfying to him. But his orientation is that he's also attracted sexually to men. The same thing applies to lesbians, you know, their, their identity is female. They learn how to act like women, and so on. But they're also attracted sexually to women. When we're talking about transsexualism, though, this is a situation where the basic issue the basic problem is in the area of gender identity. That is, one has the sense of being the identity or the sex that is not congruent with your body. In other words, you're born into the body of one sex. But as far back as you can remember, you've always felt and and felt more comfortable perceiving yourself as the opposite sex. And as you well know, this causes a great deal of turmoil and confusion for individuals who find themselves having these kinds of feelings.



S Sarah Dipalma 24:13

Well, I hope that addresses some questions right from the start, we've had several callers who, who called and said that they were either gay, or they were straight. But they were cross dressers. And they were really hurting. They were really scared and they didn't understand the difference between gender and sexual orientation. And I know I've attempted to explain it, my co host is attempting to explain it, but it's so muddled for them. They just can't quite grasp that. It brings up another question for some of the callers who who asked and say, Well, I'm gay, or I'm straight, but I like cross dressing, or I think maybe I'm gonna transsexual and don't know the difference. If you would talk about some of the differences between a transvestite, say a transgendered person in a transsexual



24:58

Okay, Again, probably the most easy way to understand this. And it's the way that I often use when I give lectures and share information with my students and residents here at the medical school in Galveston, that is that cross dressing should be viewed much like a symptom. Now, what that means is, and they can relate to this certainly very easy as a fever is a symptom. If you have a fever, it means something's going on. But you really don't know what it is, you know, is there an illness in this part of the body, that part of the body, you know what's going on. So it's basically a symptom that needs to be looked at more, the same thing I find when it comes to cross dressing, people who cross dress do this for a variety of reasons. Some people

do it because it provides a sense of calmness, a sense of bringing out their feminine side, we refer to these folks as heterosexual cross dressers or as you mentioned transvestite as the old terminology, then you have people who cross dress for money, they are impersonators, this is this is business to them, then you sometimes have the the homosexual male, for example, who crossed dresses, in a in a campy kind of way, is making a statement about femininity. But he's doing this as as perhaps, part of doing shows are your drag queens, so to speak. And then finally, you have the transsexual someone who's cross dressing, because it feels right, it feels normal. So again, there's a variety of reasons that people cross dress. And I think the the role of the professional is really to listen to folks and to try to understand why they're doing it. And so often, though, I think, because of the tabloid shows, and some of the misinformation that's out there, people get very confused when in fact, the more you listen, and the more you work with all these different groups of folks, it makes a lot of sense.

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Sarah Dipalma 26:44

And for those of you who are sitting out there and say, Well, okay, well, that sort of explains it. Don't feel bad that you're confused. I go and talk to legislators quite often. Bend Austin, and they don't understand that either. And we sit there and we have to explain the same things to them over and over because they also watch Geraldo. So that's what they know about us. Another point of confusion comes up in classes when I told him that I've not had the surgery. Now, I haven't reached the conclusion as to whether I will or won't, so that I explained the truth of the term transgender, and within variably, I get from them as well. You mean, we aren't what our genitals are. I've even I've even had politicians tell me that. I've been told that in classes even by professors. In fact, we had a judge who's to who actually wrote that into a name change case, refused to grant gender change on the grounds that well, your genitals are this therefore that is what you are. If you wouldn't exchange it, you can address the confusion about what a body presents, opposed to the way a person feels about their body.

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27:46

Okay? Again, I can understand that's a very confusing issue because for years and years, most people simply focus on the genitals when it comes to identifying whether someone's male or female, those of us that are in this field, and certainly are much more aware know that sexuality is defined along a continuum of parameters. One has chromosomes, sex, that is whether you're xx or XY, one has hormonal sex. In other words, what is the relative balance of hormones in your body, primarily male that has testosterone or female estrogens, then one has the the anatomy of sexuality, whether you have the penis and testicles, or the vagina and ovaries, then one also has what we call brain sacks. We know now that there are discreet differences between female brains and male brains in terms of anatomy, in terms of biochemistry, and so on. And finally, we have the whole issue of sex of assignment and rearing, that is whether you're given the traditional blue blanket or the pink blanket at the delivery room. And then suddenly, people start treating you according to those kinds of cultural cultural expressions, they treat males in one way females another. So the reality is that sexuality can be looked at in a variety of ways. Unfortunately, most people have simply looked at it from the point of view of the genitals. But I think what we're trying to do now is educate the courts, educate the public, that this is a much broader issue. And in fact, in the case of the transsexual, for example, we tend to feel that the person has all the normal, let's say male characteristics,

the XY, the male hormones, the male anatomy, but something goes wrong towards the end of pregnancy, hence, they come out with a feminized brain. So we can't change the brain. So what we now do in terms of treatment, and working with folks is change the body to fit the mind.

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Sarah Dipalma 29:39

One of the things that comes up when I go and I talked to the classes, and they will say to me, Well, how did you know that you felt like a female? And I always tell them, I had no idea what it felt like to be female. I only knew that it wasn't a male. And then I watched their eyes kind of glaze over as they try and think that through. Is that a fairly common expression? Do you hear that? That sort of expression for From people who are, I don't even like the term gender dysphoria, because it sounds like a disease are there for people who are trying to find their way through the gender process?

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30:08

Yeah, I think that's very common. In fact, I like better what you said, because so often people come in with what we hear in the, in the classic textbooks in the show is about feeling trapped in the wrong body. And that is simply not the way it starts for people. You know, when you're 34567 years of age, you don't have the capability in a cognitive thinking way to be able to step back and recognize that you're different from others. And aha, this is the problem, all you know is that you just don't feel right, that you just don't feel like you want to do the boy things that you don't fit in with the boys, but you feel more comfortable with the girls and, and that's why you have that sense of feeling different. And so often folks will begin with cross dressing around that age, often in private, because it just, it feels right, it doesn't feel like the other way. It's not until people develop into adolescence and further, that they suddenly have the ability to develop insight to become aware of such such abstract issues as as identity and orientation and begin to recognize what's really going on. And usually that's the point where people begin to put two and two together and come up with the terms transsexual or gender dysphoria, or the like.

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Sarah Dipalma 31:23

I know, I didn't know what the term transsexual was until I was about 23, or 24. And actually, I heard it on a Larry King program driving back to college station one night. So that's how I learned about that. Let's talk a little bit about what transgender people deal with in terms of emotional trauma. When I go and I talk to the classes, they're often shocked when I tell them Well, I was about six years old, when I began to realize something that the way other people thought about their body was not how I viewed mine. And then I'll say to them, I'll explain to them I was maybe eight or nine years old, and then I started praying, you know, like, God was gonna send a lightning bolt and fix me. And they kind of look at me, and they'll say things like, well, it's not possible for people to know that eight or nine years old. And look, I'm sorry, yes, it is. I know, I've heard stories. It's some of the get togethers that you had here. How give us some sense, some sense of the age. When do people start realizing, is there any general age? When do people begin to realize they're not like the other persons?



32:23

Oh, that varies along a continuum as well. I've had some of my patients tell me that. They were aware as far back as three, four or five years of age, and there are others that it's it doesn't hit them until childhood or late childhood or adolescence. What's the common theme, though, as I indicated is, is just that feeling of not fitting in. And sometimes people try very hard to fit in, you know, I've had a lot of patients who, you know, they'll get married, they'll do the traditional macho things, or the traditional feminine things, they'll enlist in the military. I've had patients that volunteered and fought in Vietnam and other conflicts. I've had a number of patients who have been in very rigid military schools and settings like that. I've also had those folks that have gotten married, had kids done the traditional feminine things, thinking that this was going to make it right. And it just simply doesn't. These kinds of feelings, these kinds of urges do not go away, they are simply suppressed. And oftentimes, these folks have tremendous difficulty in relationships, on jobs, because they just don't feel right.



s Sarah Dipalma 33:24

I had the good fortune to recently interview Kate Bornstein, the author of *gender outlaw*, she went through three marriages, and went through a bout with the Church of Scientology and getting into cults, before she finally began to come to terms with it. So if those of you who are out there and you're struggling with it, you really can't come through the other side. It just takes some time. Another thing that we've heard from is we've heard from parents. We had a parent call us recently, who was really in pain, really convinced she did something that made her child transsexual. So the parents understand this is not their fault. I don't even like that word. But so they noticed the it's not their fault. Can you tell us a little bit about what what's known about the origins of transsexuality or transgenderism?



34:14

Well, I think traditionally, in years past, experts tended to feel that this was a psychologically based problem that some sort of difficulty in rearing or problems and identification with one sex or the other caused this, but again, we just did not have the technology to fully understand the problem. I liken it very much to the whole problem of childhood autism. And what I mean by that is that decades ago, experts came up with the term refrigerator parent, meaning cold parents who somehow caused this severe disorder in kids. That's all we knew at the time. Now, today, we have the technology we understand that this is clearly a biological problem, something that goes wrong in the central nervous system. I think we are on the verge of identifying that same kind of thing when it comes to transsexuality. Most experts today believe that it is something that goes wrong, so to speak, while that individual is developing in the uterus of the mother, in other words, it has to do with hormones, but hormones that are fetal hormones, things that go on prior to birth. As I alluded to earlier, sexuality involves a number of elements and develops across the entire span of fetal development. Some of the first things that occur are chromosome sex, or mono sacs, development of bodies, but we tend to think something may go wrong along those critical stages, such that what happens is the person is born with the anatomy of one sex, but born with the brain sex of the opposite sex. So we do tend to believe that it is biological. And that's why now basically, experts in this area, have stopped trying to psychotherapy, PI's people out of this, and instead, listen to him and instead try to help them with medical interventions to be happy and to be successful. And I might note that some of the follow up data and published articles that we've done

through our program here in Galveston shows that people can lead very happy and productive lives. And once they complete this kind of treatment, you know, we have folks that, you know, truck drivers, doctors, lawyers, computer programmers, homemakers, I mean, a whole variety cuts across the socio economic span, these folks can be very, very happy and very successful and typically become more happy and more productive once they start being true to themselves and get involved in something like this.

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Sarah Dipalma 36:39

That's one of the things that I've always most enjoyed about these get togethers. I'm always amazed at the variety of people, their, their air can airline controllers, they're they're engineers, they're all sorts of things. And I sometimes I've been told, actually, I was told this by a legislator, that they were reluctant to work for transgender issues, because, after all, mostly, they're just unemployed people. And I had to spend an hour explaining to them that that was not so

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37:07

Exactly. Yeah, that's a real myth. I think, again, people tend to think that transsexuals largely are drug addicts, prostitutes, and so on. And yes, those kinds of folks occur, but they also occur in the real world and in other kinds of situations. By and large, however, this represents the smallest percentage of the transgender population. Most of our folks, as you well know, from, from attending some of our gatherings, we wouldn't make *Heraldo*, we wouldn't make *hardcopy* we'd be too dull for those kinds of ratings. Our folks are very simple, very ordinary. Their goal is simply to blend in to develop their own lives to go through this kind of real life transition, come out the other end and get on with their lives. And I think we've been very successful to help those kinds of folks that we've worked with.

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Sarah Dipalma 37:54

And it's interesting. Phyllis Frey and I are very good friends and the both of us have been contacted at various times to be on television talk shows. And they usually won't take us because we're too, too or too average. You know, we're not, we're not enough of a freak. And I talked to Kate Bornstein about this exact same thing. And she said that when she was put on the *Geraldo* show, she was put on there with three other transsexuals who are sorry that they had to gender change. And she was the token one who is there to be happy about it. And one of these days, we're actually going to get to talk shows to talk to take us as normal human beings, but their ratings may go right through the floor. There was a question that I wanted to ask you also about stereotypes. I have been told by my co host, even that when you say the word transsexual to them, they think of the painted streetwalker. Now, I don't know any people like that. And yet, I've heard that in the street community, too. What do you think you? What do you think these stereotypes are coming from? I mean, they have no basis in fact.

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38:59

Oh, yeah, I think these stereotypes simply come about because some of the more bizarre individuals who managed to make it on the shows, for example, I think as I mentioned, this is a

individuals who managed to make it on the shows, for example, I think, as I mentioned, this is a relatively a very small percentage of people who stay in this kind of streetwalker mentality, but something that it should be pointed out to is it. As I tell folks going through this kind of transition, it's like going through adolescence, again. If you think about it, it's when you think of adolescence, what are we talking about, we're talking about a period where there are physical changes in the body, there are a host of emotional changes, one's having to establish new relationships in terms of jobs and, and peers and intimate ones and, and you're beginning to emancipate some from family. All this has to happen to people who go through this real life test. And so I'm not surprised that people run into mistakes at first, and I'm not surprised that sometimes when people start that cross living journey, and they start it Starting with experimenting with cross dressing, that they make some mistakes, maybe they put on too much makeup or the dresses are too short or, or they're looking too macho with and then they paste on some sort of mustache or something. Because they think it's right. That's their stereotype in their mind of what a man and a woman is, and they go out and they get laughed at will believe it. This happens to adolescents too. Sometimes young girls put on too much of this or that or or boys do too much of this or that you have to learn. Remember, I told you that gender role that as being a man or being a woman is something we learn, and we make mistakes. And so I think sometimes the public tends to focus on those mistakes, and then generalize this and say, aha, this is what the whole group is like, when in fact, I'm willing to bet your money that folks have walked by transsexuals in malls and on the street and probably work with them. And don't even know it. Because these folks have blended in successfully. That's been their goal is just to live an ordinary simple life. And they've done it very successfully.

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Sarah Dipalma 40:57

I occasionally go and speak to employers on behalf of people who are trying to transition on the job. And it's really it's almost amusing, I've, I've gotten to the point where I've learned to laugh at it, because I'll walk in and the first thing they say to me is, you don't look like a man and a dress. And they'll look at them. Yeah, but it took me years to get here. And they they sort of wonder about that. It actually sort of leads to the next question. There are there are people who are like myself, who are not sure that they're going to have the surgery I may or may not, I'm still still debating it. But for those who do choose surgery, there's a process that he has to be followed. If you would tell us a little bit about the hairy Benjamin society, talk about what real lifetime is, and maybe give people some sense of the process that leads up to surgery.