

SARAH OK, he apparently is back. So we'll see if we can get him on the air again here.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: OK, let's try this one more time and see if our system is working.

SARAH OK. OK, caller are you there? OK, hang on a second. We're going to try and get you there. OK, can you hear me

DEPALMA: now?

CALLER 1: Yeah, I can hear you.

SARAH OK, thank you. If you would, I'm not going to ask your name. I don't want you to identify yourself.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 1: All right.

SARAH What I would like to do is just talk a few minutes. Repeat on the air what you were telling me, because I think it's

DEPALMA: an important subject to cover.

CALLER 1: Well, where I'm from, I'm from Great Britain, and a lot of people there are a lot more liberal. And since I was about nine, 10 years old, I've enjoyed dressing in women's clothing. But I don't consider myself a homosexual because I don't engage in homosexual activity. But I like to dress up as a woman.

SARAH OK.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 1: And I'm a resident alien over here in the United States, and I'm about to move over back to Great Britain because I just think they're prejudiced here towards homosexuals.

SARAH Well, OK, let me start at the beginning. You told me off the air that you don't desire to be a transsexual. Is that right?

CALLER 1: That's correct. I don't want a sex change. I'm enjoyable in my masculinity. I mean, I'm a man. But I'm-- I don't know how to put it in words.

SARAH OK, let me start with some basics. First of all, there are a lot of cross-dressers. There is nothing wrong with being a cross-dresser. And most of the cross-dressers that I know are heterosexual.

So don't confuse cross-dressing, don't confuse your gender, your sexual orientation with gender issues. They're not the same. In fact, most of the cross-dressers that I know are married. Many of them have children.

A cross-dresser is not a transsexual. A transsexual is a person who basically believes that they're in the wrong body. For lack of-- that's not really the best explanation, but it seems like it's the clearest.

CALLER 1: I understand that. But sometimes, I feel like almost I am in the wrong body sometimes.

SARAH Well, let me say a couple of things to you. I know people, some of whom are very good friends, who have been

DEPALMA: cross-dressing for 30 years. And that's all they ever want, that's all they ever do, and it's all they're ever going to do. And they are perfectly well-adjusted, supporting, taxpaying members of our community.

And I am aware that, in the transgendered community, there is a lot of pressure put on cross-dressers, as if to say to them, well, transsexuals are the elite. So if you want to join the elite, you have to be a transsexual. And I'm here to tell you that's not so.

You do not have to become a transsexual. You do not have to be anything more than what you're comfortable being. That's it.

CALLER 1: Because that's what I was wondering. I've been out before, and I've picked up women that were lesbians because I was dressed as a woman. And they came on to me and I picked them up. But then they find out that I'm a man, and they totally freak out on me.

SARAH Well, honestly, maybe I have I have a different view than some people. I don't like to play those kind of games on people. I think it's unfair to them.

And I'm not criticizing you. I'm stating my own opinion. I've never done that because I think that's unfair. It sort of feels like baiting somebody under false pretense.

CALLER 1: Well, can you see where I come from, though?

SARAH Yeah, I do. And my point to you is that you can be whatever you want to be. And I think sexuality and gender is all over the place. Where this idea came from that one must be this or one must be that is crazy.

CALLER 1: --since we're kids.

SARAH Well, that's right. That's right. When are you leaving for Britain, if you don't mind my asking?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 1: Before Christmas, because I want to go back and spend the Christmas holidays with my relatives over in Great Britain. They actually live up in Scotland.

SARAH OK, are you coming back to this country?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 1: I don't want to.

SARAH All right. Well, let me make a suggestion to you. Are you familiar with a magazine that's called *Tapestry*.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 1: Yes.

SARAH OK. In the back of *Tapestry*, you'll find listings for international organizations. And many of those were in Great

DEPALMA: Britain. I'm talking about cross-dressing organizations now.

When you get to Britain, I would suggest that you come contact them. I'm not talking about transsexual organizations, but groups for cross-dressers. You will find that if you join and get involved with a group of cross-dressers who can support one another and can lend psychological support, you will feel much better about yourself.

CALLER 1: See, but I'm going to go back over and live with my grandparents. And I don't understand if they'll accept it.

SARAH Yeah, that's a tough one. I can't answer that for you. Family is always a problem.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 1: My family are on that trip where they're totally masculine and stuff like that. And they don't really accept me at all. In fact, I've been just exited from all their family functions.

SARAH Well, you don't cross-dress at home, do you? I mean, are you going to be living with them?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 1: Yes, but I only dress up when I go out.

SARAH Right. Well, I don't know what to tell you there. One of the things that we talk about on this show is that

DEPALMA: sometimes, if you're living at home, it's not a good idea to come out, especially if you are dependent upon them for your support. If you are dependent on them for monetary support, for a roof over your head, it might be best for a while to let things wait until you are on your own. That doesn't mean it's going to go away.

Let me tell you something that cross-dressers do, and you might even be familiar with this term. I know a lot of cross-dressers who do go through something, and that's called purging. What they do is they might have a wardrobe that they've spent three years building up.

And then they decide they're wrong, they're evil, they're nuts, they're rotten, whatever. So they simply burn the clothes. They throw them out. They get rid of them. And they think, well, I'm just going to stop dressing and it's going to go away.

CALLER 1: I've never burnt any of my clothes. I've just hidden them from my family.

SARAH Right, and you know what? That urge doesn't go away. What happens is, later on, it comes back, and it comes

DEPALMA: back twice as fierce as it was when it left. Cross-dressers, I think--

JIM CARPER: That's called repression. When you repress yourself or repress your natural urges, it's never a healthy thing.

SARAH And in many ways, I think cross-dressers have it tougher than transsexuals. First of all, transsexuals have more

DEPALMA: psychological support. There's more support available to them. Secondly, transsexuals often end up in divorces, and those are often very bloody and brutal. But eventually, they end up on their own two feet.

JIM CARPER: Mm-hmm.

SARAH Cross-dressers are often in marriages, so they're trying to talk to wives about it. Or in the cases like yours,

DEPALMA: they're young people who are at home with families. They're confused about it.

They don't understand the difference between gender and sexual orientation and sexuality and attraction. And it all is a big blur, and there's nowhere to go for help. So I identify with what you're saying.

And don't give up on yourself. And I strongly would urge you, when you get to Britain, even if you-- let me point out something to you. A lot of cross-dressing organizations understand that you can't dress at home.

CALLER 1: Yes.

SARAH For example, there's a group here in the city called the Tri-Ess sorority. And they are for cross-dressers, and one of the best things that they do is tell people bring your clothes with you. You can dress here and it will be safe. And when you leave, you can take the clothes off, go back home, and nobody has to know a thing. It's a safety valve.

CALLER 1: I'm really afraid in this country. There's so much hostility towards cross-dressers and transvestites, and even homosexuals. I don't understand it.

SARAH Well, if you think it's bad now, let me tell you something that you're probably not going to want to hear. Houston is probably one of the best places in the country to be transgendered or be a cross-dresser. And I'll tell you why.

First of all, we have an attorney here in the city named Phyllis Frye. Phyllis Frye has successfully fought so that cross-dressing is not illegal in Houston. Now, I have already had a couple of cases come up where police have arrested cross-dressers and have told them it is illegal. And it isn't.

JIM CARPER: And It isn't.

SARAH And It isn't. And I have been working with Ray Hill and Annise Parker and with other people, and we're getting those things taken care of. It's not that the police are being vindictive. They truly don't know better.

JIM CARPER: Yeah, I think that's right.

SARAH They really don't know better.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: The laws have been changed here, and I need to break--

CALLER 1: I don't think that I can be accepted here in this country. And I'm trying to move back to my homeland because I think they're a lot more liberal and the accept people for what they are.

JIM CARPER: That can be. I have to break in right here and remind people that they are listening to KPFT Houston. This is *After Hours*, queer radio with attitude.

SARAH Right, and this is Sarah DePalma with Jim Carper.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Yes. And we're talking to a listener from Great Britain. And it does seem that cross-dressing is more of a British thing.

SARAH Well, cross-dressing certainly has more of a history. It goes back to the old Victorian days, I think. Here in this

DEPALMA: country, cross-dressing has been around. But it's still a relatively new phenomenon.

CALLER 1: Well, I'm not exactly from Britain. I'm from Scotland up north. I'm born in Edinburgh.

JIM CARPER: Oh yeah. I've been there. It's a beautiful city.

CALLER 1: I mean, I was just brought up that all the men were wearing kilts and stuff. And I got teased a lot when I was younger for wearing a kilt, and they said it was a dress. And I just naturally thought that was a lot better to wear.

SARAH Imagine being a cross-dresser in Lubbock, Texas.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Yes.

SARAH Imagine being a cross-dresser in Waco.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 1: I don't want to imagine it.

SARAH Well, the point that I'm trying to make is that teasing occurs wherever you go.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Sure.

SARAH And it doesn't make it any easier, whether you're in Scotland or Waco, because it's painful to the individual. I

DEPALMA: would strongly urge you, when you get to Britain-- or when you get to Scotland, I know there is a Scottish cross-dresser group, because Phyllis just came back from addressing those folks. So I strongly urge you, when you get over there, look up these groups and talk to them.

I know that they have arrangements where you would be able to go and bring your clothes there, dress. It takes the pressure off. It will help you survive until you get on your own two feet.

CALLER 1: OK. Thank you.

SARAH Thank you for calling. I really appreciate it.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 1: Thanks a lot.

SARAH OK. Good luck. Cross-dressing is something we haven't talked a lot about on the show. But it's certainly here. It's

DEPALMA: certainly here.

JIM CARPER: You're right, you're right. We get a lot of calls at the gay and lesbian switchboard from straight cross-dressers.

SARAH Right.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Because these guys are calling maybe crisis hotline, and crisis hotline thinks of, oh, cross-dressing, that's a gay thing.

SARAH Yeah.

DEPALMA:

[CHUCKLES]

JIM CARPER: So you will find that if you can get through to the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, 529-3211, that you will probably find that you're talking to someone who's had experience talking to other people who cross-dress, and can give you places to go, groups, phone numbers, all that kind of stuff.

SARAH One of the things that I've always been most interested in is that many of the people who are cross-dressers find
DEPALMA: that it doesn't really come on full force until after the married.

JIM CARPER: Oh, really?

SARAH For some reason, and then they're scared to death. Here are people who have a wife, kids, a mortgage. And all of
DEPALMA: a sudden, here's this new issue. And oh boy, you really don't--

[LAUGHTER]

JIM CARPER: And I remember Phyllis talking to the switchboard years ago about cross-dressing and the transgendered community. And she said, first of all, when you're talking to someone over the phone who's just getting into cross-dressing, they are not going to be able to pass. No matter how good they think they're doing, they are not going to be able to pass.

And they want to know what to do. And the easiest thing to do is say come to Montrose, dressed, have lunch at Charlie's, shop The Curve. All of the people who have shops along The Curve have lots of cross-dressing clientele.

SARAH Houston-- I said this earlier and I really mean this. Houston is probably one of the best places in the country to be
DEPALMA: if you're a transgendered person. First of all, you've got Phyllis.

Then you have a political organization, which I head, which is located right here in Houston. Cross-dressing is not illegal. And the gay community is friendly, which is not universally true in many cities. But I guarantee you--

JIM CARPER: OK, let's not give anybody false hope here. Yes, we're friendly. But a lot of gay men are going to look off to the side and say, mm.

SARAH Depends on where you go. If you go to a drag bar, for example, which is where I started out, it's very easy. If
DEPALMA: you're going to go to Heaven, you're making life tough.

JIM CARPER: That's right, that's right. So let's not give false hope here, because there's going to be prejudice in the gay community, too. There's just not probably going to be as much of it that as you might expect.

SARAH It's interesting, the most prejudice that I've received has been from lesbians.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Really?

SARAH And the reason has been that they don't understand cross-dressers in particular. They truly believe that many of
DEPALMA: the cross-dressers are somehow mocking women. Or worse, they will say they are trying to emulate what is the worst of women with their long nails and their lipstick. And somehow, it violates some sense of feminism.

JIM CARPER: Well, I don't really understand that. Maybe we need to have a lesbian talk about this.

SARAH I was actually told from a guest on the *Lesbian and Gay Voices* a few weeks ago, I was told flatly that I didn't
DEPALMA: belong in the lesbian and gay program, and what was I doing there? That happened to come from a lesbian. To which I responded, well, I'm not going away, so get used to it.

[CHUCKLES]

JIM CARPER: Coming from a gay male perspective here, let me say, I don't understand lesbians not understanding cross-dressing, because I have been to a lot of lesbian bars where very good-looking men turn out to be women. So I don't quite understand not understanding cross-dressing.

SARAH Right. I think for them somehow, it violates some sense of feminism that somehow cross-dressers in particular are emulating that part of womanhood, which they have worked hard to leave behind.

JIM CARPER: There are a lot of lesbians that are cross-dressing.

SARAH Well, that's true. And the funny part is they don't think of it that way.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: See?

SARAH I find it very interesting. At least that has been true. It's not to say that gay males don't discriminate. Generally, **DEPALMA:** what you'll get from a gay male is some little snide comment and they'll go their way.

JIM CARPER: OK.

SARAH Whereas lesbians often will stay and argue the point with you.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: OK, OK. I think that's it. It's like, oh, mm. She can't pass.

[LAUGHTER]

She ain't passing.

[LAUGHS]

SARAH I'm glad you said that, because that brings up a point. If you're a cross-dresser out there, and you know you don't pass, don't go out in public until you do.

JIM CARPER: Well--

SARAH Now, I'm not talking about going to a Tri-Ess group, for example, because they'll help you learn how to pass.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: That's exactly-- yeah, that's the point I was getting at. Yes.

SARAH But let me talk about my own history for a minute here. When I first started going out in public, I didn't know better. I went out with a wig I promise you that no drag queen would have used for a dust mop, OK? And I--

JIM CARPER: Oh, well.

SARAH I was just so desperate. Now, why would I say to you, if you can't pass, don't go? Here's the worst-case scenario. **DEPALMA:** This is an actual case because it happened to me.

I happened to be at a party. It happened to be at Bacchus, as a matter of fact. And I don't drink, thank God. I had been at the Garden Party and had borrowed a wedding dress from a friend.

JIM CARPER: OK.

SARAH So it is now about quarter to 11:00 at night. And I am on my way home and I realize there's an HPD officer on my tail.

JIM CARPER: And you're in a wedding dress.

SARAH And I'm in a wedding dress. And this car has followed me out of Bacchus. So I know he's there.

DEPALMA:

He waits until I'm halfway to The Heights. For the folks who live inside the loop, if you know where Center Street is, out in the industrial district, just about where the trestle is, that's where this guy decides to stop and pull me over. And he pulls me over and says, you have a light over your license plate which is out.

JIM CARPER: Oh, give me a break.

SARAH I swear to God, it's a true story. And so he pulls me out and decides that, also while I'm there, I have been driving

DEPALMA: erratically. So I am in a wedding dress and heels. And this clown decides that he wants to do a DWI test on me.

JIM CARPER: Sure.

SARAH OK? The whole time, this guy is making comments.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: I'll bet he is.

SARAH And not only that, but there must have been six HPD cars who drove by to look at the freak in the street.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Oh, brother.

SARAH Problem-- they got me. And I said--

DEPALMA:

[JIM LAUGHS]

--I said to him--

JIM CARPER: Yes?

SARAH --be sure your badge number is on this ticket. And he said, why? And I said, because you and I are going to meet
DEPALMA: in court. That's why.

And he said, is that a threat? I said, oh no. That's a promise.

I said, make sure your name is on it. Well, he did. He did. To his credit, he put the badge name on it.

JIM CARPER: Good.

SARAH When the time came up to show up in court, honey, I showed up in full regalia. And I was ready.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Good.

SARAH As luck would have it, we had a Black female liberal judge. And the whole time we're there, this cop just keeps winking at the judge, saying to them, well, you know, I got this person in Montrose, wink, wink, wink. And finally, the co-officer said to her, I don't care if you've got her on the dark side of the moon. Why was she pulled over?

[JIM LAUGHS]

And so the officer tried to explain why he pulled over. And I said, well, I'll tell you why, Judge. And I went through the whole story.

In the office, the judge said, well, first of all, this case is dismissed. Second, this is not the first time we've had a complaint on you, officer. And it better not happen again. As we were leaving, the officer said to me, I know where you live.

JIM CARPER: Uh-huh.

SARAH And my response was, your badge number has been registered with Houston Gay Lesbian Political Caucus. And I **DEPALMA:** have turned you into the American Civil Liberties Union-- which was true, I did, and said, if anything happens to me, we know your name. Now, if that had been anybody else, that cop would have gotten away with it.

But the truth was, I didn't do a good job of passing. So I was an easy target. Learn to pass, then come out to the Montrose. You will be safer. You will have a better time.

JIM CARPER: Yes, yes.

SARAH And if you don't know how to do that, go to one of these groups where you can dress safely and privately and **DEPALMA:** learn.

JIM CARPER: There's Erotic Cabaret on Westheimer. There's Basic Brothers. There's used clothing stores. Any number of people in these stores will give you makeup tips.

SARAH Right. A friend of mine made an interesting point. He happens to be a cross-dresser, and he and several his **DEPALMA:** friends go to a Merle Norman boutique.

JIM CARPER: Sure!

SARAH Well, it turns out these places are privately owned. Your money is as green as anybody else's.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Right.

SARAH They don't laugh at you. They're glad for the business.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Mm-hmm.

SARAH So you can go--

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: And you can have a Merle Norman makeover.

SARAH Right. Well, I don't know about you, but I feel like I've been talking forever.

DEPALMA:

[LAUGHTER]

I think I'm ready to go to some music here. We're on CD number two, is that right?

JIM CARPER: CD number two. It's one of my favorite bisexual singers, Sophie B. Hawkins, from her brand-new CD. It's called "Right Beside You."

[THEME MUSIC]

(SINGING) *After Hours, After Hours.*

[MUSIC - SOPHIE B. HAWKINS, "RIGHT BESIDE YOU"]

[AUDIO OUT]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SARAH OK, we are back. And we have another caller on the line. Let me see. OK, caller, can you hear me? Caller?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Yes.

SARAH OK. Can you hear me OK?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Yeah.

SARAH All right. First of all, I know that you're nervous. And I promised you off the air, so I'll say it now on the air, I'm not

DEPALMA: going to say anything that's going to embarrass you.

CALLER 2: I understand that.

SARAH OK. I don't want your name. First of all, I'm glad that you called.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: OK.

SARAH Tell us-- you had said off the air that you were a cross-dresser. Why don't you explain your situation a little bit?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: OK, see, I'm homosexual. And-- [EXHALES] I-- I cross-dress off and on. It's just when I'm dressed like a female, I enjoy it. I have my special-- how can I put this?

SARAH You just put it in your own words. Relax. You're with friends here.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: [EXHALES] I feel more like a female, like a woman, than I do a man. I enjoy cross-dressing, and I want to have my sex change. But then again, I don't. I'm stuck in the middle of this.

SARAH OK, can I ask how old you are?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Sir?

SARAH Can I ask how old you are?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Huh?

SARAH How old are you?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: 27.

SARAH 27. OK, and you say that you're gay.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Yes.

SARAH OK. I'm going to say something that I said to the other caller. The hardest thing for people to understand is the

DEPALMA: difference between sexual orientation and gender.

CALLER 2: Uh-huh.

SARAH Gender is what's in your head. Gender is who you feel you are. Sexual orientation is who you are attracted to.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Two different things.

SARAH Two totally different things. Now, the fact that you enjoy cross-dressing has nothing to do with your sexual

DEPALMA: orientation. And I'm going to tell you something that I hope-- I don't want this to confuse you. What I'm trying to do is present to you that there are options. There are people who go from male to female and end up living as lesbians.

CALLER 2: Yeah.

SARAH There are people who end up going from female to male, and end up living as gay men. And there are all sorts of

DEPALMA: places in-between, everything in between. And the only thing that matters is what's right for you.

CALLER 2: Well, see, I enjoy being with a man. I mean, I guess it's the same thing with every homosexual. But I feel like a female. I feel a woman.

SARAH Right. Do you feel like that when you are not dressed as a female also?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Yes.

SARAH You do. Well, it is conceivable that you may be a trans-- before I say that, let me-- I'm thinking to myself here.

DEPALMA: There is cross-dressing, there is being transgendered, and there's transsexual.

And let me see if I can explain the difference. I think we've already talked about cross-dressers a little bit. I am a transgendered person. I am a person who, I guess, though still biologically male, I live as a female. I have had a name change, a legal gender change, so that I am by every other sense of the word "female."

CALLER 2: Uh-huh

SARAH That is an option for people today that didn't exist a few years ago. I fall in that category. Phyllis Frye falls in that

DEPALMA: category.

More and more people are choosing that option, partly because surgery is very expensive and partly because it's very dangerous. Now, there are people who decide that that halfway step-- and it is a series of compromises. You may have heard me say earlier, there are days that I'm glad there are no high bridges near me.

[CHUCKLES]

But there are people for whom those compromises don't work, and those people go on to become transsexuals. Those are people who move forward and decide that surgery is their only or best option, and they go through with that. But it's a long step from being a cross-dresser to being a transsexual. And the only way that I know people get through that is that they either join some of the groups that I've talked about, or they seek counseling in a place like the Montrose Counseling Center, which works on a sliding scale basis and where you can work that stuff out.

CALLER 2: Mm-hmm. OK, another thing about it is that-- see, I'm Mexican. And I guess everybody's got their own problems with the family, but my family is really against homosexuality, period. I mean, they know that I'm gay.

We never talked about it. They just know. We just never brought up or-- just like that.

SARAH Right.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: And all my friends, they're-- how can I say to say this without being racist about whites.

SARAH You're having-- there is a sense of racism towards you. Is that what you're saying?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Yes.

SARAH OK. It is unfortunately true that no matter what community you belong to-- I don't care whether it's gay, non-gay, straight, you take your choice. It is unfortunately true that racism exists in all of those groups. I'd like to think that it's getting to be less.

But I hear from my friends of color that's not necessarily the case. And I don't know how to answer that, other than I know it complicates your situation. I will tell you this. Dr. [? Cole ?] has a what he calls a get-together every so often. It is some of the alumni of people who have been through his clinic and their guests.

I have listened to people who are Hispanic and I have listened to people who are of color, and I know just listening to them that their journey has been harder because they have had to deal with two issues-- the issue of color and the issue of their orientation or the issue of their sexuality. I'd like to tell you I have some advice on how to handle that. But honestly, I don't. I think racism is endemic. And I don't have an answer for that at all.

JIM CARPER: Racism is like, I think, all the-- why don't you turn me on there?

SARAH There we go.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: OK. Racism is like all the other -isms, and it's a fear of something different. That's what I've fought all my life. Everyone is different. That is the joy of life-- of discovering these differences. There's no reason to fear it.

SARAH Can I make a suggestion to you?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Yeah.

SARAH There is a group here in the city that's called Gulf Coast Transgender Community. They are not only open to gay

DEPALMA: and lesbian cross-dressers, but they have many members who are. And you will find their ads in the public news.

You'll find their ads in *TWIT*. You might want to contact them, if for no other reason than it would be a good place for you to start as a support group. You would be with friends. And sometimes, just talking to other people like yourself helps you find out where you really are.

JIM CARPER: Mm-hmm. All of a sudden, you're not so alone in the world--

SARAH That's right.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: --when you're around other people who think like you do.

SARAH I've said this before, but I know when I was growing up, I was convinced I was the only one. And I get the sense

DEPALMA: from you that you feel like you're a loner out there. That sound about right?

CALLER 2: Yeah. See all my friends, they ask me, well, since when have you realized that you're gay? And I'm like, well, since I can remember.

SARAH When did you know you were straight?

DEPALMA:

[LAUGHTER]

CALLER 2: It used to be hard for me. As a matter of fact, I was in the closet until about two years ago. And I started coming out. And in a way, I felt relieved that I did. But then there was a lot of rejection towards me.

JIM CARPER: Sure.

CALLER 2: And, I have always said that if they liked me before, for what I was, I don't see why they should stop being friends because they know what I am. You understand what I'm saying?

SARAH Mm-hmm. We're both sitting here nodding our heads, because yeah, we get it.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: We get it.

[LAUGHTER]

And we've been through it in our own separate ways. Me, I'm a gay man. And Sarah is a transgender. Yes, so we know, we know. Sarah, you've been on many journeys in your life.

SARAH Yeah, I've gone through the whole process of coming out twice-- once as a gay male, and once as a

DEPALMA: transgender male to female transsexual.

JIM CARPER: Mm-hmm.

SARAH [LAUGHS] So I should have the process down by now.

DEPALMA:

[LAUGHTER]

JIM CARPER: But still, there's joy in coming out. And then it's not all roses either, as you're finding out. But what you do find out is that people who do accept you, those are really good friends. These are the people who you can count on.

SARAH Are you OK now?

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Yeah. To be honest with you, yeah.

SARAH OK.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: I kind of--

SARAH You done good. You did real good. And I really want to stress what I said to you.

DEPALMA:

The Gulf Coast Transgender Community would be a good place for you to start. They are open and welcoming to gay and lesbian transgender people. You would be able to find people there who are in the same boat at least that you are, if not an identical situation.

And having those people to talk to would probably just do you a world of good. Let me tell you an interesting story. When I first started coming out-- this lady won't mind my using her name because she's very public.

JIM CARPER: Oh, OK.

SARAH There is a cross-dresser here in town by the name of Jackie Thorne.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Oh, I know Jackie.

SARAH See? Right away.

DEPALMA:

[LAUGHTER]

JIM CARPER: I know Jackie.

SARAH OK.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: A well-known name, huh?

JIM CARPER: Jackie has talked to the *Gay and Lesbian Switchboard* about cross-dressing.

SARAH I lived in The Heights, and I had a funny situation. When I was married, as part of the divorce, my wife sued for

DEPALMA: my female wardrobe, and she got it.

JIM CARPER: No!

SARAH I swear to God.

DEPALMA:

[LAUGHTER]

I swear to God, she sued for my female-- this is College Station, honey. Anything can happen there.

[LAUGHS]

JIM CARPER: That's low.

SARAH This was College Station. Yeah, she sued for it. That's not the worst of it. She promptly gained 50 pounds and

DEPALMA: couldn't wear any of those.

[LAUGHTER]

Oh, she's going to sue me for saying that.

[LAUGHTER]

But it was the truth of the matter. So I moved to Houston and I had no clothes. And I was desperate.

And the only person I could find listed anywhere was Jackie Thorne. So I called Jackie and I'm in tears. And I say, oh, God, please Jackie, you got to save me. Jackie showed up with clothes--

JIM CARPER: Really?

SARAH --a wig, and makeup, literally loaded me into her car, and said, I'm taking you to a Tri-Ess sorority meeting. Now,

DEPALMA: that turned out not to be the group for me, because they were primarily aimed at heterosexual couples. But it was a start.

JIM CARPER: There you go.

SARAH It was a start. And here I am now leading a transgender rights group. And I know Jackie loves to come back and

DEPALMA: say, I knew you when.

[LAUGHTER]

And it's true. She's one of very few people in this community who did. But, I mean, I started from as far behind the eight ball as a person can be. So believe me, there's hope for you, OK?

CALLER 2: Yeah.

SARAH Don't give up. Contact GCTC. Get into a support group. Just having people to talk to does all the difference in the world.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Well, it did tonight, I tell you.

JIM CARPER: Good.

CALLER 2: I feel relieved [INAUDIBLE].

SARAH Jim and I were just talking about this earlier. Well, one of my friends asked me the other day and said, why in the hell would you want to stay up till 3:00 in the morning--

DEPALMA:

[LAUGHTER]

--on a Saturday have you lost your mind? Well, this is the reason.

JIM CARPER: This is the reason, yes. This is the reason I work at the switchboard.

CALLER 2: And I'm glad you're on the air, to be honest with you. It feels good to hear people that are in your same community, I guess I could say.

SARAH Listen, KPFT serves a heck of a service in this community. I don't know where we'd ever be without them. And I

DEPALMA: got to tell you this. There's not another radio station on the air that would have me on, let me tell you.

[LAUGHTER]

There's not another station probably in the state that would do this. And I know how lucky I am to have this forum. And I know how lucky I am to be here, and I hope we do reach some people.

CALLER 2: Yeah.

SARAH Thank you very much for being here. I really appreciate it.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Oh, thank you.

SARAH And good luck to you.

DEPALMA:

CALLER 2: Thanks for listening.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

SARAH You bet. Bye bye.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: Take care. I do have a piece of music we can play. And it's Romanovsky and Phillips. It's on CD number one, and it's a lighthearted look at what we've been talking about tonight. It's called "My Mother's Clothes."

SARAH Oh, I like that. Let's go for that. one.

DEPALMA:

JIM CARPER: OK.

[MUSIC - ROMANOVSKY AND PHILLIPS, "MY MOTHER'S CLOTHES"]

(SINGING) There was a man who took a stand to try to shed some light--

[AUDIO OUT]

[MUSIC PLAYING]