

- BARRY:** Job on it and the planning that went into it, just everything that's provided for in the architecture and all the different spaces I'm very impressed with. But it's also been a very difficult management job, and it's tough to have everything happened together at the same time.
- GIGI:** That sounds like quite a statement of pride and kind of a GLBT pride versus just one segment of the community having pride.
- MATT:** I think that's true. And a couple of things that touch up on the building. The building includes, I believe, it's an 1878 Victorian building on one side, and then this new from the ground build up a new structure of more modern design, and those elements melded together. I'll just say one thing because Barry and I were at the opening gala the week before, and it was very exciting, and many people spoke.
- And one thing I have to say that the mayor of San Francisco, Willie Brown noted, and it really rang true, is that he said people from all over the world will come to this building and this will be one of the most photographed buildings in the city because as people know that San Francisco is one of the centers for queer people. People will come, and they will identify what that building as a key part of their lives, and they want to want to capture that on film. And I thought that was very, very wise to say.
- BARRY:** Yeah, and I think that Willie Brown was speaking also about the architecture and saying people will come to see this because there's nothing else like it. There's no building on the planet that looks like it. It is a unique architectural achievement.
- GIGI:** Wow. Sounds like a lot of diversity for a diverse group.
- BARRY:** And I was very impressed by the opening ceremonies there. The building cost \$50 million. Now a lot of why it cost so much was that they restored that 1878 building that's a part of it. And restoring something is a lot more expensive than building something from the ground up. But of that money, \$6 million was put in by the city of San Francisco, and I believe about \$1,000,000 was put in by the state of California and about half a million by the US government.
- GIGI:** Oh, wow.
- BARRY:** And the rest was raised from individuals, corporations, and foundations.
- GIGI:** That's quite an extreme amount.
- MATT:** Within the community.
- BARRY:** Yeah. And one of the things they did in raising that money is they decided that they want to have a really broad base of funders. And they started this campaign to have 1,000 people give \$1 a day for three years which is \$1,000. And they actually have 1,600 founders who've donated \$1,000 or more.
- GIGI:** And while we're on the subject of fundraising, I understand that BiNet USA has a lot of initiatives going on. Can you tell us a little bit about what's happening with BiNet USA on fundraising?

BARRY: Sure. One of our initiatives is fundraising house parties for BiNet USA, which we've been very successful with in the past in the last year and a half. And we've got a whole slew of them starting again now. On April 20 in San Francisco, we're having a house fundraising house party for BiNet USA. On May 11 Saturday night, we're having a BiNet USA house party at the New York Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community Center.

And I will be there in New York City for that meeting. And the New York center just about six months ago added bisexual and transgender to the name of the center, and that's something that BiNet USA volunteers and others worked for a long time to make happen. Now the same night that we have that party in New York City, we're also expecting to have a party in Los Angeles, although I'm not sure it's going to be May 11 or May 18. And Vernita will be at that party in Los Angeles.

So that's one of the things we're doing is that that's been very effective for us is the house parties. And people gather, we tell them about BiNet USA, and they give whatever they feel they can.

GIGI: If people are interested in attending one of these parties, who should they contact?

BARRY: They can contact BiNet USA. Yes, actually, if you just write to binetusa@aol.com and we'll make sure we hook you up with the right host for what area of the country you're in. And if you'd like to host a house party, we have a whole program that will train you and support you in doing that. And it's really a fairly simple thing to do.

MATT: Did myself here. I guess it's been a year and a half ago. And it was quite successful. And people really appreciate the opportunity to come out and support the community and have a nice evening. Chris Barry catered that evening and was, of course, very delicious food.

GIGI: And if people want to find that email address and don't remember it right off hand,

BARRY: They can go to our website, which is binetusa.org. You also can make a contribution on our website using your MasterCard or visa. You can also get an address at the website where you can email a donation. The website again is www.binetusa.org.

GIGI: Yes. And I do want to mention one thing on credit card donations.

BARRY: Yes.

GIGI: You can do it anonymously.

BARRY: Yes, you can. You can actually donate on our website anonymously if that's your preference. And that's fine to do.

GIGI: Well, what are some of the other initiatives happening?

BARRY: A year ago, we started our first major donor campaign, in which we invited people to give between \$500 and \$10,000 to fund the future of BiNet USA, and that was very successful. And in the next few weeks, we're going to start that again.

Also, we've been working on getting grants. And we did receive our first foundation grant from the Gill Foundation. And that is actually a matching grant. So when you give to BiNet USA right now, that will be matched one for one by the Gill Foundation.

We're also working on some events that will be happening in San Francisco. And in particular, we're starting the planning for Celebrate Bisexuality Day, which, of course, is September 23 every year. As one of the founders, GiGi can tell you.

GIGI: Oh, yes.

BARRY: And I'm hoping that we can have a big gala in San Francisco that weekend, which will be a fundraiser for BiNet USA.

GIGI: Oh, that'd be super. Well, Matt, I'm still fascinated because you've been around for such a long time and have seen so many changes in the bi movement.

MATT: Sure.

GIGI: What do you feel is kind of in the future for the bisexual movement?

MATT: Well, you know, it's interesting because you can kind of look back to the past and see how far we've come. And one of the things, of course, I always think about is how in the International Directory of Bisexual Organizations, which Robyn Ochs put together out of Boston, of course, I think I've got every copy back from the photocopied version of the late '80s.

And I think the first listing of groups had like probably a dozen groups in half a dozen cities. And now, I don't-- I'm trying to think of the numbers. It's probably 1,200 groups in 50 countries across the world of organized bisexual people in groups and organizations throughout the world. And so, the movement has been growing just exponentially.

And I think we're in a position now where with BiNet USA having a permanence and having its paid staff and its office and so forth. It's a place where whereas before, we had to fight a lot for visibility. We were like, hey, we exist. And for many years, even from some of the gay and lesbian community, it was hard to-- we had to kind of prove ourselves that we, in fact, are a valid sexual orientation, that we exist and we're here.

I like when the chance from the-- I think it was about the early '90s, is hey, we're here. We're queer. Get used to it. So the Bis are here. We're here to stay. And we're now to a position where people, I think, can access to so many resources that weren't around the web, of course many, many, many publications, many different newsletters in ways that people could connect and find people such as themselves.

GIGI: You touched on one thing that's really I've seen a tremendous growth in, and that's the internet, yeah, and the bi presence on the internet, especially the heterosexually identified bisexual. I know there's a men's bi group that's just humongous now.

BARRY: Yeah, the men's awareness network, and they're having a conference in October in San Diego, which one of our board members is helping to produce.

GIGI: Yeah, and you know, with this growth, I know BiNet USA in the past is mostly brought in, or most of the people that have come into BiNet USA in the past have been from the gay-identified Bis. They've come in from the gay community and who were used to being out. And I know it's a whole different kind of perspective when you're heterosexually identified.

BARRY: Yeah, and actually, I like to speak on that a little bit, GiGi. When I first got involved in BiNet at USA about nine or 10 years ago, I was much more heterosexually identified.

GIGI: Oh, wow.

BARRY: And I remember because I was the co-producer of the conference in 1993, which was a very large conference with over 600 people. And I remember people were talking of that time about after the conference we should have a they called it a control queen's party. And I didn't understand what they were talking about. I never heard the word queen used in that kind of way because I just wasn't familiar with the gay community, which over time, I became.

But I think it is kind of natural that BiNet USA so far has really focused on the more gay-identified bisexuals because our work is activist work, and it's tough for people who are not out to really participate fully in that. But I think it's very important for us now to reach out to all different sectors and begin to bring in whatever way they can be involved the straight-identified Bis.

GIGI: I know BiNet's gone through quite a transition this past year and a half two years.

BARRY: Yes. Yeah, we're still in transition. The transition from an all-volunteer organization that is run out of volunteers homes across the country to a staffed organization with a national office. It's an amazing transition. There's just a lot involved. And you don't know what's involved until you get into it.

GIGI: And here I have to kind of quote [? Lonnie ?] [INAUDIBLE] or loosely quote her. But I think she kind of touched on something that's really important, and that is that BiNet USA became too successful to stay in an all-volunteer organization.

BARRY: Absolutely. That's absolutely true. And that's one of the reasons we decided that we have we had to become staffed. And the miracle of it is that for the last 10 or 12 years, BiNet USA existed on about \$10,000 a year. That's how much we raised and spend. And then in the last year and a half, we quadrupled that.

GIGI: And for a national organization, that's a pittance.

BARRY: Right. And you can't have a staff on \$10,000 a year. You can have conference calls and do some mailings, and that's about it. But we're now operating on a \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year budget which just barely enables us to have a staff in an office. But the fact that we went from a \$10,000 a year budget to a \$60,000 a year budget in the space of about a year and a half is pretty amazing.

GIGI: Well, Barry, I know where we are right now, but where do you see us going in the next year?

BARRY: In the next year, I know some people will be disappointed by this, but what I really see is that for the for most of the next year, we're going to continue to have to focus on infrastructure and fundraising. And that by a year from now, we will have a much more solid foundation, and we'll be actively engaged in working with the media and building our media response network around the country.

GIGI: You mentioned earlier that we did the CNN piece.

BARRY: Yes.

GIGI: And I think when things come up, we will be there, right?

BARRY: Yes, we will be there, and there will be other things like that will happen that we'll be able to take advantage of. And also, we have a very good working relationship with GLAAD, and I think over the next year, we're going to be able to work with GLAAD, particular on building the groundwork for a lot of the media work that will follow. For instance, we're going to build our media database. We're going to build our media kit that we can send out as a resource kit for media professionals.

All of that ground laying is going to take place over the next year. And the results of that in the following year will start to really be seen a lot more.

GIGI: And what do you see happening then?

MATT: Well, I agree with Barry. I think part of what's interesting and exciting about this time is that with the base foundation, this will allow Vernita and the growing organization to have just greater capacity to then reach out to people to do education. As you know, there's just such a dearth of information out there about bisexuality, and this will be a place to go to for people can have access.

And most importantly, when they're seeking information, we'll have the basis and the capacity to get back to them and provide them with some resources that are going to be, I think, very, very helpful.

BARRY: One of the things I hope to see maybe in a year and a half, two years, is that we have a media response and network around the country that can really move the media so that maybe sometime next two years there'll be a bisexual character on television who'll be a regular character on some TV show.

GIGI: Wow.

BARRY: I mean, right now, I don't know if many of your listeners may watch the show *Queer As Folk* on Showtime. A lot of people don't get cable. But it's a fantastic show about the lives of queer people, and it really hasn't touched on bisexuality at all. And it's in its second season now. And is a wonderful show, but I'd love to see them have a bisexual character.

MATT: Sure.

GIGI: And I think you know, once again, it kind of it gets back to that invisibility equation. I think this is an excellent step to help bring the bisexual community out and visible.

BARRY: Right. And I think what is starting to happen is that you know, for a long time, there's been a small group of bisexuals who are willing to be out. And what's starting to happen is that group of bisexuals is realizing that if we want more visibility and we want more bisexuals to come out, we've got to fund that effort because without us putting our money into it, it's going to take a very long time.

GIGI: Well, boy, the time's flying by. I want to give each of you a few minutes to kind of do a little recap of what you think about BiNet USA and your work. I know we've all worked hard on it. And kind of give some ideas of what it's like to be part of a bisexual organization.

MATT: Well, where I'll start is that the great thing, of course, of getting to the place of being comfortable with your sexual orientation regardless of what it is, having that level of confidence and peace with yourself. And for bisexual people, I think that's a challenge. It's not something that you're going to find ready-made out in the culture that supports you. You're not going to even in most major metropolitan cities in the country that have a gay and lesbian community is that bisexuals I think you've got to work a little harder to find that space.

But once you do and find people that you can connect with, then it is just it's very, very empowering. And I think when you get to that point, then you can turn some of your energies to helping other people. And I know that in my work as a bisexual activist, it's been most gratifying of having people come up to me after a book reading or an event and just being so thankful to have a space that can be really just comfortable and being themselves and not have to worry about what people are thinking about.

Hey, where is this person coming from? Well, as a bisexual person, we are like just about anybody else. But we want to have a space that we have a comfort level in.

GIGI: I think that's one of the things that I felt for many years early on in my life was isolation. And I remember the magic of my first bi conference. I walked in the door, and there's 300 bisexuals, and I was like, wow.

MATT: This is in San Diego, right?

GIGI: Yeah.

MATT: That's where I remember I met you first. It was a lot of fun. It was, I think, '93.

GIGI: Yeah. And it was like this-- it felt like I'd gone to Oz or something.

BARRY: Well, that something for me that's been very rewarding is to have a community where I can really be fully myself and be accepted fully as myself. But the other thing that, for me, has been so rewarding is that this is a place from which you can change the world. I mean, how many movements can you participate in and then very quickly take a major national leadership role?

And that's one of the great things about the bisexual movement is that, in some ways, it's still in its infancy, and it's all available. I mean, whatever you want to do, you can do it.

GIGI: Yeah. And definitely, BiNet USA will use volunteers.

BARRY: Absolutely.

GIGI: We haven't changed to all staff only.

BARRY: No, no. We just have one staff. We still have many volunteers, and we need many more. And everyone is welcome.

GIGI: Well, any other comments that you'd like to throw in about either the gala or about BiNet USA?

MATT: Well, I just want to say that this is a great opportunity, and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening.

GIGI: Oh, you bet.

MATT: It's been a lot of fun. I think that people again that are out there listening, BiNet USA does have a lot to offer. It can give people resources and direct them to a lot of different ways to connect with other people. And for that reason alone, it's a great opportunity.

BARRY: Yeah. I just want to also say I really appreciate the radio program that you're doing. And I know that you've got listeners all over the world yet that appreciate this through the internet. And I know there are bisexuals all over the world. There are people listening to this program who maybe don't have the ability or to tell others that they're bisexual.

And we're having actually the seventh international bisexual conference this October in Sydney, Australia.

MATT: That's right.

GIGI: Yeah, I think we should mention Fritz Klein's page because he's got lots of information about conferences happening all over the world.

BARRY: That's right. Yes. Do you know the URL for that, GiGi?

GIGI: I think it's bisexual.org.

MATT: I think that's right.

BARRY: Yeah, bisexual.org. And I think for the international conference, it's bi.org.au.

GIGI: I know that we have a link to it from the BiNet USA web page under the links.

BARRY: Yeah. And then another great page with lots of bi links is biresource.org.

MATT: Yes.

GIGI: Yes.

BARRY: Yeah.

GIGI: Well, I want to thank both of you all for being part of the show tonight.

BARRY: Thank you.

GIGI: It's been fabulous, and it's just so wonderful all the things happening in San Francisco and with BiNet USA taking off. Oh, it gives me goosebumps. So we are here and queer and ready to go. Thanks again.

BARRY: Thanks a lot.

MATT: Thank you so much.

BARRY: Good night.

CHRIS ANNISON: I have to turn on my mic now, I guess.

GIGI: Yes.

CHRIS ANNISON: Very good interview. I mean, a lot of information you all were passing out there, and I don't think we even started talking about naughty tingly parts. It's unusual for you.

GIGI: It's unusual for me.

CHRIS ANNISON: Which is fortunate because I forgot to do the disclaimer at the beginning of the show.

GIGI: Do you want to put in a quick word? We mentioned Fritz Klein. He will be on our next edition of the Bisexual Show on *After Hours*. So that'll be next month.

CHRIS ANNISON: The beginning of May. I don't know what the date is on that.

GIGI: May I think 6.

CHRIS ANNISON: 6?

GIGI: Yes. But anyway, we will be getting into the naughty bits on that show a little bit.

CHRIS ANNISON: Well, Jimmy will be back then so. Jimmy will be back, so he'll remember to play the card. I didn't realize it's two different cards here. For those of you who are listening in and going what in the world we are doing, this is *After Hours* queer radio with attitude on KPFK Houston and KEOS college station

I'm Chris Annison, sitting in for Jimmy Carper, who is out in San Diego. When he was running out the door, he said something about naval maneuvers, seaman, and torpedoes in the hatch. So I'm not sure what he was up to.

GIGI: Oh, I think I've got a good idea. [INAUDIBLE].

CHRIS ANNISON: Do you want to give some plugs or information about BiNet Houston?

GIGI: Yes. BiNet Houston is now having their weekly meetings on Thursday nights instead of Wednesday nights, same time, 7:30 till 9:00, and it's meeting at the Hobbit Cafe, which is on Richmond in between Kirby and Sheppard.

CHRIS ANNISON: I hope so. I've seen the notices. I just haven't called on exactly where it's at.

GIGI: Yes. And it's the address, and the phone book is Portsmouth. Forget the numbers, but the sign is actually on Richmond, and the entrance is from Richmond. And if you want to call the BiNet Houston phone line, let me see if I can get this 713-467-4380. Got it.

CHRIS ANNISON: And you still have your website?

GIGI: Yes, we've got the website, and that one's a little more difficult. It's www.flash.net/tildebihouse.

CHRIS ANNISON: I forgot you're just flashing it there, and there's the fun parts with the long internet providers like that.

GIGI: Yeah. But if you go to the BiNet USA web page, we do have a link to the BiNet Houston, so you don't have to remember all that.

CHRIS That's binetusa.org?

ANNISON:

GIGI: Yeah.

CHRIS Hey, I was listening. Caught you on that one. All right, well, thank you, GiGi. And we look forward to, well, I guess

ANNISON: we should talk about male members since this is a membership station.

GIGI: Yeah. Well, the next show is going to be the male member and how to get it off and all different kinds of ways. Baby, it's going to be hot.

CHRIS All right, we're going to take a little music break here. First of all, I need to tell you because I didn't tell you at the

ANNISON: beginning here, we started the show off with true soul, a Houston artist, and the song was called "Head Games."

And we're going to take a little music break, and we're going to come back--

GIGI: And don't forget station call.

CHRIS Oh, I did it at the beginning. I want to give another one here. I remember that Jimmy is the one who forgets. But

ANNISON: train of thought there. We'll be back with the *After Hours* News and Views Magazine after this. You're listening to KPFK Houston KEOS college station.

[MUSIC PLAYING]