

**TRANSGENDERED LAW STUDENT
FRIDAY LUNCHEON**

1

2

3 PHYLLIS FRYE:

4 As yesterday, I want to again welcome
5 you to the first ever conference in the area of
6 Transgender Law and Employment Policy, and as
7 we have said several times during our committee
8 meetings, the reason why we have chosen the
9 title "Law and Employment Policy" is because
10 employment is one of the biggest problems that
11 our community, the transgender community, does
12 have.

8

9 If we can get jobs, or keep our jobs,
10 usually we can somehow surpass and take care of
11 the other problems, so we wanted to emphasize
12 this law conference on Law and on Employment
13 Policy. A lot of what you hear right now, I'll
14 be saying for the benefit of the people
15 listening on the audio tapes and in the written
16 transcripts, so if I'm redundant, or state the
17 obvious, you hear at lunch, just bear with me.

13

14 As we sat here at lunch, people were
15 asking me, "What do I take out of this law
16 conference?" Well, there's two things that
17 you're going to take out of this law
18 conference: One is the fact this law
19 conference was a success because it happened.
20 Another thing is that the date has already been
21 selected and you'll hear about it at another
22 one of our meals, and the location has already
23 been selected for the second conference. We
24 are going to have the second conference, so as
25 you go out I want you to tell everybody in our
26 community about the second conference, and I
27 want you to tell them about our proceedings.

21 (The same introductions were given here as on
22 Thursday lunch, therefore, they are skipped.)

22

23 I'm going to introduce Alice in just a
24 few minutes. But Alice met me while I was a
25 student in Law School, and I'm going to let her
26 tell that story. Because of that I want you to
27 know all the fun that I had in Law School, so

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1 I'm going to tell you a little bit about my Law
School experience.

2

3 I am a licensed engineer, and back in
the '70s before I applied for Law School, I was
licensed in three states. I hold two
4 engineering degrees from Texas A & M
University. In 1976, one of the very last
5 things that was on my mind was going to Law
School. But in 1976 when I came out in
6 transition, the engineering community was very,
very much more closed and even more homophobic
7 than it is today. Therefore, my transition was
not tolerated even a little bit, and I was
8 blackballed.

9

10 I began a job search, and I decided to
cash in on my Veteran's Bill -- the G. I. Bill
of Rights -- and go to college and get a
masters degree. I decided on business
11 administration because I figured that going to
school and getting the G. I. Bill would
12 generate some income, and it would give me
something meaningful to do. As we know, those
13 of us have suffered from unemployment, as we
transition, one of the diseases of unemployment
14 is loss of self-esteem because we're not
allowed to contribute our talents and our
15 energies.

16

17 Also, I figured an MBA would make me
more valuable as a job candidate. It would buy
me another year while people got used to who I
was, and it would give more people the
18 opportunity to meet me and interface with me in
the classroom, and who knows, they might hire
19 me.

20

21 I investigated local colleges and I
came upon the fact that the University of
Houston offered a joint degree, an MBA and a
law degree. And that, my friends, is how I
22 became a lawyer. And that's the only reason I
became a lawyer. Because the University of
23 Houston had a joint degree and the G. I. Bill
would pay for it.

24

My first year in business college was

1 great. Everyone was very nice and very
2 supportive. My first year in Law School, and my
3 second year in Law School, my third year in Law
4 School were hell. It was really a bad
5 situation. Each March or April the pressure
6 was so intense that I would go into a crying
7 jag and a fit of depression where I didn't go
8 to school for a whole week and I'd cry all day.

9 I found out later when I applied for
10 the school that was a big faculty meeting and
11 everybody was worried about "the issue" that
12 everybody worries about, the restrooms. We all
13 know that. Quite a few professors got very
14 indignant, not against me, but about the
15 professors that were worried about what
16 bathroom I was going to use. They said, "I'll
17 walk her to the bathroom if it keeps you happy,
18 and if it gets her into Law School, I'll let
19 her use my bathroom."

20 During my interview at Law School, I
21 was told about changes in that it used to be a
22 men's Law School. Then they started letting in
23 women so, they added and they made some
24 one-holers. Then they said, "Well, we got
25 Phyllis, so we're going to make those just
26 restrooms, and anybody can use them." They told
27 me that if I would use those and I would lock
28 the door that everything would be fine. And it
29 went pretty good. The problem was is that they
30 didn't have the foresight to put my classroom,
31 or my study carrel, or the Law Library anywhere
32 near the one-holers that were simply labled
33 "restroom." Whenever I had to go to the
34 bathroom, it would be just like with you now.
35 You're right in the middle of something, and
36 you have the urge. You just don't go to the
37 restroom. You've got to go down three flights
38 of stairs, a long hallway to the other end of
39 the building. After a couple of weeks of that
40 I said, "That was silly."

41 I'm getting along pretty well, so I
42 just decided to use the ones that were close
43 by. I got called in about that, and they said,
44 "Didn't we make a deal?" I said, "Well,
45 yeah." Then I explained to them what I just

1 said to you. I said, "How many people
complained?" And they said, "Four." I said,
2 "Out of this entire Law School only four
people are complaining?" I said, "I'll tell you
3 what, I'll make you a deal. I'll tell you which
three restrooms I use -- I don't use the others
4 because I don't need them -- and you can tell
those four people that they can take the long
5 walks." That's what happened.

6 Law School is a very lonely, lonely .
situation. The first six months, I guess, there
7 were less than ten students who actually talked
to me. I adopted several strategies. One of
8 the strategies I'll talk about in just a few
minutes, is how I met Alice. One of the
9 strategies was that I would go and I'd
introduce myself to each professor in their
10 office. I would borrow their seating charts. I
would study the people's names. So during
11 class when I should of been listening to torts
or contracts or property, I was looking at
12 seating charts and putting student's faces to
names. When we walked in the hall, I would
13 call them by their name. Most people-- most
people are nice, and when you speak to them by
14 name they kind of open up. That was one of the
strategies.

15
16 Another thing that happened was that
the Christian Legal Society put a notice in my
study carrel. They were littering all the
17 other study carrels, about coming to their
meetings. I'm a Born-again Christian, and I
18 thought, "Oh, wow, this would be a great
opportunity for me to meet some people and
19 finally break this deadlock."

20 I went to their first meeting. We
talked. The second meeting, I was denounced.
21 I was told to leave, or I'd be shunned. During
the next 30 months they held secret meetings,
22 so they wouldn't have to pray with me. They
layed hands on me at my invitation once. Then
23 they complained after two hours of laying hands
on me that I didn't change. They gave me a
24 bunch of shit. "Shits" the right word -- and
you can put shit in the transcript -- about

1 loving the sinner, but hating the sin, for
2 months and months.

3 During my last semester of Law School,
4 I wrote a real long list of everything that had
5 been done to me during those 30 months -- most
6 of it in the hands of the so-called Christian
7 Legal Society. I gave it to the Dean of
8 Students.

9 Let me digress. I just remembered
10 something. When they were doing all of this in
11 the early stages, about five months after they
12 started shunning me and holding meetings
13 elsewhere, they did another invitational flier
14 at the beginning of the next semester. I took
15 a flier and I Xeroxed it onto a page, and I
16 wrote beneath it, "Not so, they don't allow me
17 to come their meetings." I cut them into little
18 strips about two inches wide, and I started
19 stapling them around the Law School.

20 I want you to know they went crazy.
21 I've used the word "cockroach" several times in
22 the committee meetings. Bigots, for the most
23 part, are cockroaches; they hate the light.
24 It's a good thing I made a lot of those copies
25 because everyday I put them on four bulletin
26 boards, and three times a day-- I even carried
27 a stapler in my purse-- I'd go by those four
28 bulletin boards, and I'd have to restaple
29 them 'cause they were just going nuts. They
30 were ripping those things off.

31 Anyway, the result of my complaint was
32 that the faculty had a meeting. The sponsor to
33 the CLS was verbally cut to ribbons by his
34 peers. An investigation was held and they were
35 given a one year, University wide, probation
36 for discrimination.

37 Also, during the second year I formed
38 a law student group. We called it, The
39 Friends, with an asterisk, of Lesbians and
40 Gays." The asterisk inferred inclusivity.
41 There were two other gay students, and there
42 were about four non-gay students who were
43 civil-libertarian type people.

1
2 We went to the University Senate on
3 campus to ask for funding for our
4 organization. Every other group on campus got
5 250 or \$400 out of the student fund, so they
6 could do their thing. The Young Americans for
7 Freedom on campus went crazy. They flew in two
8 lawyers from Austin to appear at the Student
9 Senate Meeting so that they would argue against
10 our \$250. We got it. But that evening before
11 I came home the Young Americans for Freedom
12 went to my home. They yelled and screamed
13 outside of our home, and they banged on the
14 windows and yelled obscenities, and scared
15 Trish, my spouse, completely out of her mind.

9 One of their other tactics was they
10 injected glue into the door lock of our
11 office. One of the idiots started wearing a
12 Scottish kilt to school in order to mock me.

11 Another tactic that I used was the
12 fact that they were having job interviews for
13 summer internships. I said, "There is no way,
14 in hell, I'm going to get hired, but these big
15 law firms need to know that people like us
16 exist." So, I started interviewing, and I met
17 Alice Oliver-Parrott. We've known each other
18 since 1980. I've taken a lot of my people
19 through her Court when she was a Trial Judge,
20 and I value our friendship.

17 I could go on and on. All I want to
18 say is Law School was interesting. I survived
19 it. I also took that letter that I gave the
20 Dean of Students and made several copies and
21 circulated it to some of my friends at Law
22 School. That thing spread like wildfire.
23 Everybody knew that I had been taking a lot of
24 junk, but nobody knew just how much.

21 The last three weeks of Law School
22 were really a lot of fun. People that had never
23 spoken to me, and I don't mean maliciously,
24 they just never spoke to me, called me by first
25 name. When I crossed the stage to get my law
26 degree, there wasn't a single hiss. There
27 wasn't a single boo. I went to my ten-year

1 reunion of my Law School, and I was invited to
2 sit right smack-dab in the middle of the first
3 row of the class picture. The Dean invited me
4 whenever I go to Law School Alumni things to be
5 sure and call him by first name. And of course
6 we endowed a writing competition.

7
8 So, I guess my story is, if I can
9 survive that, you can survive, and those of you
10 listening to the tapes or reading the
11 transcripts can survive going through Law
12 School.

13
14 Now, Alice Oliver-Parrott. Alice is
15 the Chief Justice of the 1st Court of Appeals
16 in Texas. She has been a trial attorney.
17 She's been a trial judge. She's been elected
18 many times with very much resounding
19 majorities. She not only is well liked, she's
20 a damn good judge. Everybody in Harris County
21 knows that. I don't want to jinx her, but I'm
22 going to be interested to see what future bench
23 she gets. It might have lifelong tenure if
24 Bill Clinton's elected President. But, I'm not
going to jinx her. I'd love to see you there.
Y'all, welcome Alice Oliver-Parrott.