Talk of the Nation

June 22, 2009 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I was asked quite unexpectedly last week to be a guest on "Talk of the Nation“ on National Public Radio (NPR) to discuss coming out as gay and HIV positive. One of their researchers liked the article (”Coming Out Again") that I had written for *POZ* about my story and contacted me to participate.

I was on vacation in Maine with my boyfriend, but they needed me to get to an NPR affiliate station for a professional sound (i.e., no cell phone). Although we drove over an hour each way to get there, interrupting my vacation was a small price for the opportunity to share my story with a general audience.

The local NPR affiliate was close to what I expected it to be--humble yet impressive. The studio had no bells and whistles, but it didn’t matter much after the headphones and microphone were in place. Before I knew it, the segment was over.

During the segment, Neal Conan, the host, also interviewed the Rev. Irene Monroe, coordinator of the African American Roundtable at the Pacific School of Religion and a syndicated religion columnist. It was an honor to share the spotlight with her, the callers and the people who sent emails. I hope sharing all of our experiences made an impact.

Most of the listener comments on the NPR website were supportive, but not unexpectedly there are comments from people who have issues with LGBT people. Here’s one that raised my blood pressure:

“This is largely lavender propaganda from the so called ’balanced’ and tax funded NPR. It’s unrebutted, unchallenged and unbalanced. The opposing side of the ideological debate hasn’t been given equal time and won’t be afforded an opportunity in the future for their

perspective. So much for tolerance. NPR is simply trying to normalize homosexual behavior.”

NPR is a news organization and its editorial coverage is decided by its editors. NPR editors it seems in this instance determined that “the opposing side of the ideological debate” is not an opposing side but instead a side that society increasingly does not consider valid. Under those circumstances, “equal time” is not merited.

Click here to listen to the NPR interview and read listener comments.

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