

I GOT THIS WAY FROM KISSING DONAHUE

By Susie Bright, an excerpt from her book, [*Sexual Reality*](#)

..... New York was at its sweaty smelliest when I arrived for the Phil Donahue show appearance. I had major diaper bag preparations to distract me before the car came to collect me at the hotel. It was one of those long limousines, with two rows of leather seats facing each other.

But it wasn't anyone from the Donahue Show lounging in the back seat. It was a blond, pinkfaced man and his female companion, who looked as flushed as he did, and very pregnant to boot. They didn't say a word. I introduced myself as if we might just be sharing a cab.

"Oh yes, we are guests on the show today too," said Raggedy Ann. "We've heard all about you."

Raggedy Andy up. "My name is Jim, and this is my wife Anna. We are members of Exodus."

My stomach jumped, and I felt like I might need a diaper myself. Exodus is a ministry that converts sinning homosexuals into God-fearing Christians.

"I didn't know Exodus was in New York," I said, looking down at my knees and wondering how they could be so close to rubbing a born-again fundamentalist's.

"Oh no, we're from Florida," the wife said. She looked a little peaked.

"How far along are you?" I asked.

"This is the sixth month."

The last thing I would have done when I was six months pregnant would be to proselytize on the Phil Donahue show. I looked over at her husband again. He seemed dressed carefully to "look straight," but not so straight as to be unfashionable. A dark purple silk shirt, black tie, and wool pants. She was silky too, in pastels and gold jewelry.

The car was stifling. My thighs were glued with sweat to the seat. I could smell my cunt. The wife was on the verge of saying something.

"We're missionaries!" She finally perked up.

Unbelievable. Why was I being so polite? Just because we were fellow performers in a circus act? I wasn't sure Anna and Jim knew that yet.

At NBC studios, Abby came flying out to greet us, teeth flashing, hair bobbling.

"You didn't tell me about the Christian missionaries," I said.

"OH NO! REALLY?"

I knew a threat when I heard one, however effervescent. Her smile said: "It is too late for you to back out now. You don't dare do anything to fuck up our show."

I heard the audience manager out in the live studio, practicing applause with the two hundred eager Donahueites, spreading adrenalin on them like mayonnaise.

Phil Donahue himself approached the four of us waiting at the curtain. He was tall; he was a star; he told us to leave our table manners at home: blurt out, interrupt, say anything the moment it popped into our heads. For god's sake, don't sit there contemplating.

The green light came on—SHOWTIME! The audience roared. I walked on stage, and Abby grabbed me by my shoulder.

"I forgot to tell you ONE thing," she said. "Don't talk about NIPPLES or ROUGH SEX—Phil doesn't like that."

Phil doesn't like nipples. I felt like contemplating that, but it was too late. The studio audience screamed. Somebody has a job to keep them screaming, continuously. Up on stage were four little orange chairs attached to each other, too small for any grownup. Wife Anna sat at one end, next to her "no longer a homosexual" husband Jim, then me, kissing-close to him, and finally Philip.

We had our work cut out for us. As much as I resented the born-again's' presence, they seemed as fragile as eggs, and I was a little worried they might crack before the hour was up.

Anna kicked things off by announcing how she wanted to be obedient to the Lord, the Lord she knew "through Jesus Christ."

What does that mean? I felt like saying, "Oh, really? — I know the Lord through my car dealer."

Jim told the story of how he rejected a life of homosexual perversion to find the true light. During the first commercial break he asked me if I had been molested as a child.

If I couldn't talk about rough nipples and stiff sex, then I was going to ask some hard questions of my own. I interrupted Donahue, who had been grabbing enough empty straws to fill a soda fountain.

"Anna, I want to ask you something." I looked into her innocent eyes. "Was there anything that attracted you to your husband because he was different from other straight men, because he came from a gay perspective?"

I had no idea what dynamite that would be. Anna's voice cracked. "Jim is *very* sensitive and *very* artistic, but that has nothing to do with his former gay lifestyle, *nothing* at all!"

I turned to Phillip, my bisexual ally on the show. "And you, does your girlfriend appreciate anything about you because you're gay?" I asked him.

He was ready. "Yes, she does, because like a woman, I *know* how it feels to be... Entered— not only the physical part, but on an emotional level as well." Once you're queer, you don't lose that perspective through subsequent heterosexual practice.

This time the audience screamed without any prompting. Half the women out there desperately wanted Phillip in their beds, and half the men wanted to kill him.

A young woman got up and addressed the next question to me. "Given your views on sexuality, how are you going to raise your child to deal with these issues?"

I went for it. "Well, you've noticed that for this entire show, we've been perfectly comfortable talking about personal issues like God and religion, but almost useless at discussing sex. I hope to give y daughter the kind of sex education I never had when I was a little girl. I hope she will meet and know people of all types of sexual orientations, so that when she grows up she won't fall to pieces whenever sex comes up."

Even my voice was starting to crack now. The show was almost over. One old geezer got up and demanded that I stop knocking heterosexual intercourse and try it sometime.

As the credits rolled, a pretty young woman got up and asked Philip and me if we two had considered getting married. Hmm, he's not my type, even though we have a lot in common, knowing how it is to be "entered," and all.

A middleaged Haitian woman with Harlequin spectacles came up to me after the cameras went down, wanting a closer look.

She was a new immigrant; her English was not smooth. "How sid you learn about sex, where do you go, a woman, to learn about sex?"

I was curious about her attraction to me, and I scribbled down a few referrals for her. But what a question she had asked! Where do we go? Why can't we talk about nipples and orgasms and genderfuck and why it's fun to wrestle on the floor without prior censorship or approval? Phil Donahue didn't have a clue, and I'm wasn't waiting for my next invitation.