

Leslie McMurray

Today multimedia journalism is at its all-time high. Journalists are told that it is best to be able to do everything. Transgender journalist Leslie McMurray has pretty much done it all. From television to newspaper to radio, she has had a career in almost every facet of journalism.

After a 30-year long career in journalism, McMurray is currently a transgender advocate. When she was younger, she had some gender identity issues which she thinks ties into her passion for radio.

“... I loved music and I loved entertaining, and so for me and it sounds funny but if somebody is you know shy and introverted you wouldn't think they would be on the radio. But on the radio, you can create whatever you want and you can do things on radio that you can't do on film or T.V.,” McMurray said.

McMurray's favorite thing about radio is being able to create images for listeners to imagine.

“You can put down a newspaper, you can turn off a T.V. or not look at it, but you can't shut your ears off. So that's the cool thing about radio is it's very invasive,” McMurray said. “So, I used to call it [radio] unfettered imagination of the human mind. And so, I know that sounds kind of complicated, but it's beautiful to me because you can create these things for people.”

The thrill of the chase stands out to McMurray from her time of being a journalist. Over the years in journalism she covered many significant moments in American history.

“I was on the air when John Lennon was murdered, I mentioned when Reagan got shot, when the Pope got shot, when the Oklahoma City bombing, I was on the air during 9/11,” McMurray said. “I was in Houston down there. Both my parents died while I was on the air, separate times and then also when the Challenger went up, and that one was also hard because there was a teacher on it, Christa McAuliffe. So, there's been all these momentous things and it's hard because you're trying to, in real time, explain the unexplainable with not enough information and make sense of things that you can't make sense of. You want to try to hold it together when you just want to fall apart.”

Being on air was always the easiest, however, for McMurray, trying to explain the unexplainable in real time with a small amount of information was challenging. McMurray said

journalism consisted of a lot of compartmentalizing because of being the face of a news person you can't fall apart until you get home.

The day McMurray came out was the same day she got fired. Her gender transition was also a transition/reinvention of her career.

"I didn't like it but I understood it. Because just talking to you and you go back and listen to that and you put that in front of somebody and you say 'who's that talking' and they're going to say 'some guy' because my voice has a lower timbre to it and I can't do anything about that and I hate it," McMurray said. "So, when I came out, I didn't feel comfortable being that guy. I didn't want to sit in a studio and be a guy and then live my life."

With a new direction in her career, she became a transgender advocate and activist. She also currently writes pieces for the *Dallas Voice*.

"I do a lot of writing. I've been published in newspapers all over the place from the *New York Times* to the *Dallas Morning News* to the *Dallas Voice* and all over," McMurray said. "So there's a picture of a female, which is me, on the article, so when you read the article you hear a woman's voice. I can't deliver that voice, but I can through writing. So it's been kind of a nice, natural transition for me because I still am doing the storytelling, I'm still doing the communicating, it's just in a different medium."

One of the things McMurray would like to be remembered by is how she told the truth and did her very best to report good information to her audience.

"I tried to give good information on the things that I'm speaking, I don't mean to sound like it's formulaic, but it's intentional," McMurray said. "I guess the best way to put it is when you're talking to a group of people, you're trying to advocate to me. I try to fight for people that can't because I have a pretty good degree of privilege in my life."

In the world, she is this empowering transgender woman, but at home she gets to be just a woman and that is what she loves about life.

"When I go out and I talk to people, the first thing I want to do is move them emotionally and make them care, because that's important. So I share personal stories and ones that they can identify with, because if all they know is that I'm a transgender woman, I mean, that's really like that much of who I am anyway," McMurray said. "My gender isn't what I think about all the time. I don't live my life as a transgender woman. I live my life as a woman. And it's great. I love my life."

Journalism will always be a part of who McMurray is and how she does things. She believes in the importance of telling the facts - especially in today's society.