



P.O. Box 24565 Los Angeles, CA 90024 (310) 472-8952 <http://www.pflagla.org>

June-July 2001

Newsletter 211

## OUR MISSION

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) promotes the health and well being of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered persons, their families and friends through: **support**, to cope with an adverse society; **education**, to enlighten an ill-informed public, and **advocacy**, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. PFLAG provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

Our meetings are always held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month at the Westwood United Methodist Church, 10497 Wilshire Bl., NE corner of Wilshire and Warner. Take 405 Freeway to Wilshire Bl. East exit. Continue 1.5 miles. The entry on Warner has an elevator; another entry is through the sanctuary to the corridor, then upstairs to the Fellowship Hall - 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. There is also easy access from the north driveway. Doors open at 6:30 pm.

PFLAG starts each meeting with a rap group where individuals can share their concerns, questions and understanding about and with the gay person or persons in their families. After the rap session, we generally have a speaker or panel of speakers whose topic includes subjects pertinent to the families, gays and lesbians. If needed, a separate group for people wishing to share and learn about people with AIDS (PWAs) is held, along with a Spanish speaking support group facilitated by Spanish speaking parents.

## OUR NEXT SPEAKERS

June 19, 2001

Joel Perry grew up in eastern North Carolina, heavily closeted because of all the horrible things he'd heard about what homosexuals were. After college he finally came out to himself. Working in theater in Jacksonville, Florida, he met Fred in 1980. They have been together since. After some acting jobs, he worked with a satirical comedy group called Gross National Product. Joel and his partner moved to Los Angeles, where he was accepted to a comedy writing workshop at the American Film Institute run by George Schlatter of Laugh-In fame. Joel now works for the same company that owns Dr. Laura and Rush Limbaugh—but they also own at least one national show hosted by a homosexual. Joel is active at Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles, and writes for Frontiers and Instinct magazines. His first book "Funny That Way" was just published by Alyson Press last December.

July 17, 2001

Roslyn Manley: "I am an early identifying, and late transitioning MTF transwoman, four years post transition. I learned in my prepubescent days that in order to be loved, I was not supposed to think about my gender-body incongruity. My friends kidded me about being a sissy, and my parents told me to act like a boy. In order to gain their love, I "acted" like a boy, then I built them a man. As an athlete, I was All-CIF linebacker at Huntington Beach High School in '62 and '63, and held the Orange County Shot Put record. I served in the Army in Vietnam where I was twice wounded and decorated. I married and have two daughters, 27 and 30 years of age. The last time I saw my daughters, was in 1997 when I told them of my need to transition. Both have rejected me." Join us and learn about Roslyn's many challenges. This presentation will also provide concrete tools for helping our LGBT youth find and develop their strength and participate fully in their families, schools, and the community in general.

**HELPLINES, CHAPTERS & CONTACTS 9 am to 9 pm****Area Code 310**

West LA: 454 6681 (Liz) LIZARM@aol.com

West LA: 472 8952 (Adele)

South Bay Chapter: 373 2351

**Area Code 323**

291 2990 (Elfi Martin)

**Area Code 562**

Long Beach Chapter: 403 1234

**Area Code 626**

Pasadena Chapter: 914 1241 (Denny)

**Area Code 661**

Santa Clarita Chapter: 254 2177 (Peggy)

**Area Code 714**

Orange County Chapter: 997 8047

**Area Code 805**

Ventura Chapter: 498 4964 (Rita or Steve)

**Area Code 818**

Studio City: 788 8678 (Lynette) Lynette114@aol.com

Woodland Hills: 340 8945 (Irene &amp; Alvin)

**Area Code 909**

Claremont Chapter: 624 6134

Redlands Chapter: 335 2005 (Kathy)

**Area Code 949**

South Orange County: 380 7035

**OTHER HELPLINES / RESOURCES****Spanish Speaking:**

(213) 487 4992 (Silvia)

(310) 453 8506 (Angela)

**African American:**

(323) 731 0888 (Shirley)

**Asian Pacific Islander:**

(818) 368 2008 (Ellen) HKameya@juno.com

**Parent of person with AIDS:**

(818) 342 1064

**LA Gay & Lesbian Center:**

(323) 993 7400

**Straight Spouses:**

(626) 449 3267 (Onnolee)

**TREVOR - 24 hr suicide prevention line**

for gay, lesbian, bisexual and questioning youth:

(800) 850 8078 [www.trevorproject.com](http://www.trevorproject.com)**Merging Identities:**

One of the National Conference for Community &amp; Justice's programs that helps gay, lesbian and bisexual youth develop positive identities relative to sexual orientation, culture, religion and family.

(213) 250 8787 [www.nccjla.org](http://www.nccjla.org)**Hablando Entre Hombres**

Spanish support group for Latino Gay Men

(213) 273 8723 (Ramon Ramirez)

(213) 273 8715 (Walfred Lopez)

**PFLAG National**(202) 467 8180 [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)**NOTE FROM THE EDITOR**

If there is anything you would like to see in the newsletter, please e-mail me at [haichi\\_ca@hotmail.com](mailto:haichi_ca@hotmail.com), call me at (323) 460-4849, or just drop me a note at our PFLAG meetings! See you at the Pride Parade! Chris Haiss

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There is a proverb that says "May you live in interesting times". For those of us fortunate enough to live in California, these are certainly "interesting" times in the California Assembly. Currently there are two bills in committees that will have profound effects on GLBT families. AB 25 would give registered domestic partners basic rights in case of hospitalization, sick leave, or death. The other bill, AB 1338, would establish civil unions in California, similar to the legislature currently in place in Vermont.

I was lucky enough to attend the PFLAG Regional Conference hosted by the Pasadena Chapter last month. State Senator Sheila Kuehl was the keynote speaker at the conference and gave a brilliant opening message for all attendees. Included in her message was the importance of written (NOT electronic) correspondence with your government representatives.

Senator Kuehl stressed that she doesn't get a lot of written mail but treats the opinions of her constituents with much care and respect. Even in this day of modern communication, Senator Kuehl and her staff feel the written letter is an excellent way to get your representative's attention.

I'm surprised by the number of people who don't know who their California assembly members are, but there is an easy way to find out. On the internet, go to [www.sen.ca.gov](http://www.sen.ca.gov) and click on "senators" and then click on "your senator". Not only will this link help you locate the office and name of your California State Senator, it will also give you additional information on your California Legislator, and U.S. government officials also.

So I'm urging you to please write your state senator and legislator and tell them how much AB 25 and AB 1338 mean to you and your family and asking them to support both bills.

Finally, Sunday June 17th marks the annual Christopher Street West Parade in West Hollywood. Break out your red T-shirt and make plans to join PFLAGLA in this wonderful event.

George Unger - Co-President - PFLAG Los Angeles

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## COME JOIN YOUR PFLAG PARENTS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS AT THE 2001 GAY AND LESBIAN PRIDE PARADE!

WHEN:	SUNDAY JUNE 17, 2001
GATHER TIME:	9:30 AM
START TIME:	11:00 AM

PARADE STARTS AT THE INTERSECTION OF SANTA MONICA BL. AND CRESCENT HEIGHTS.  
(Information booth at northwest corner can tell you exactly where the PFLAG group is located.)

WEAR OUR COLORS RED (T-)SHIRT & WHITE SHORTS/PANTS.

We walk 1.8 miles. PFLAG routinely gets a standing ovation as we walk past the crowds.

It is one of the most exhilarating feelings you may ever experience!

Bob Chase, President, NEA (National Education Association)

March 25, 2001

### Bullyproofing Our Schools - To eliminate bullying, first we must agree not to tolerate it

Another bullied and tormented boy brings a gun from home and commits murder at school. Another dazed community spokesperson stands up in front of television cameras and says, "We didn't think it could happen here." Santana High and Columbine have forced adults to focus on bullying. But in truth, bullying has always had serious ramifications. And the consensus among leading researchers such as pediatric psychologist Dorothea Ross is that bullying today is more frequent-and much more vicious-than it was 10 to 15 years ago.

If we adults continue to insist that bullying is a normal part of growing up, even a "character building" experience, then, to be blunt, we have never listened, I mean really listened, to a child who has been victimized by persistent bullying. For children who are constantly picked on, ridiculed, threatened, harassed, or robbed, school becomes torture. As a teenage girl from Naperville, Illinois reported in NEA's recent Safe Schools Now television program, the bullying can get so bad that you yearn for death because "then it will stop."

Let us dispel, once and for all, the myths. Bullying exacts a terrible toll on children. Their school work suffers, their physical and mental health suffers, and the scars can last a lifetime. Bullying is also bad for the bullies because they never learn about consequences. Sixty percent of the boys identified as bullies in middle school had one criminal conviction by age 24, according to psychologist Dan Olweus in his groundbreaking work, *Bullying at School*.

Another revealing study, reported by Ross, takes us inside the minds of the bullies. When high school seniors in a Virginia school were asked why they had relentlessly persecuted much younger boys, one of them said: "Pick on people? We do that all the time. We pick on the little guys. We don't leave them alone. Why do I do it? To have fun. To really have fun."

Other troubling discoveries also emerge from Dorothea Ross' research. One is that the child who is being bullied often does not tell his or her parents. They are too afraid, ashamed, or discouraged.

Secondly, when parents complain to the schools about bullying, "generally, little is done to correct the problem and school officials react with total indifference, although sometimes they go as far as to blame the victim."

In the wake of the recent school shootings, however, this may be changing and not a minute too soon.

Not only do schools need to set up procedures for conscientiously dealing with individual instances of bullying, they must also create a whole school approach.

A single school assembly will not solve the problem. Every school, elementary or secondary, needs to create a formal code of conduct. And every adult in the school, every student, and every parent should be well briefed in the code as well as the consequences for not living up to it.

What's more, students, teachers, and school support staff must be trained in how to intervene effectively. Eliminate the silent bystanders, and we go a long way to eliminating bullying.

Every time an adult does not speak out or intervene when witnessing the bullying or harassment of a student, they are complicit in that abuse.

Another theme from the research is that bullying can become particularly virulent if the victim is thought to be gay or lesbian. We must incorporate this knowledge into our anti-bullying efforts.

Bullying may be as old as the hills, but resources exist today from NEA and other organizations to help adults prevent it. In fiction, Harry Potter possessed magical powers to silence his bully-the abominable Dudley Dursley. In real life, children don't have such magic at their disposal. Caring adults and concerned communities are all that kids have to protect them.

## Larry & Lynette Sperber's Outreach...

- Lynette and Larry attended a Resource Day for about 100 gay dads and their kids, telling them about PFlag.
- Lynette and Larry attended a Reception at the Gay and Lesbian Center, given by the Lesbian and Gay Psychologists Association honoring Linda Garnets.
- Lynette and Larry spoke to homeless gay youth who are living at the Gay and Lesbian Center.
- Lynette and Larry spoke to a group of Graduate Students at U.S.C.
- Lynette and Larry attended the PFlag National Board meeting in Washington D.C.

### Note from the editor:

In June, we celebrate gay pride month in many countries. Remember how it started? It all started in June 1969 with a drag queen-led rebellion against police raids at the Stonewall bar on New York's Christopher Street, who said enough is enough. One year later, we had the first pride parade here in Los Angeles in memory of this event. The principal founder of that first parade was Morris Kight, a well-known gay rights activist. But there were also courageous people who never made it into the history books, who said enough is enough, and who paved the road for a better life for their gay children. One of them was Lorraine Gordon, Albert Gordon's late wife. Her previously published article was written in the early 1970s when taking a pro-gay stand was not a popular thing to do. Thank you Albert, for submitting this wonderful, empowering letter! And thanks for everything you have done in support of PFLAG throughout all these years!

### **From Your Parents With Love** (by Lorraine Gordon)

We Parents of Gays feel that one of life's most precious gifts is a Gay child. To have this gift is our special privilege. As parents, we have nurtured our mutual love until there is no knife that can sever the bond between parent and child.

We have formed an organization simply to stand as a wall of protection between our children and those who would try to destroy them. *To Reach Our Children, They Must Trample Us First!*

We realize that your fight has continued for centuries, that you have been ignored in every struggle for Human Rights, or for any Rights at all. It is our intention - no, not intention, but our ultimate and final fight - to see that every Gay person is accorded the rights and dignity given to every other human being.

Your struggle is our struggle because we share your pain. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our love and support for your endeavors; to avow our partnership with you in all the fights ahead; and to celebrate with you in all of your victories, of which there will be many, and to *Just Be There With You*.

Never again will you be forced to wear a pink triangle on your arm. Never again will there be the fear to express your sexual orientation nor loneliness for any Gay child in need of parental expressions of caring from other people who open their arms to comfort and ease the pain. There will never again be fear of any kind because we stand united, and no oppressive wind can separate us.

Reason and understanding will be reborn, and your contributions will be recognized. You will continue to increase the value of your work for peace and harmony among peoples. The world which has shut you out, ridiculed you and ostracized you shall one day open to you and welcome you to its heart as an important - even essential - component of human expression, and the wedding of knowledge and recognition will unite humankind.



## Netherlands Holds World's First Gay Marriages

Abigail Levene, Reuters  
Monday, April 2, 2001

The Dutch continue to lead the way on gay rights, becoming the first nation in the world to let same-sex couples wed legally.

Two lesbian brides and six gay grooms became the world's first same-sex couples to wed legally, tying the knot on Sunday in a colorful communal ceremony in Amsterdam.

They married minutes after a Dutch law allowing same-sex matrimony came into effect.

The four couples exchanged vows in the rose petal-bedecked city hall of Europe's gay capital, Amsterdam, to the cheers and whoops of family and friends -- some clad in tight black leather, others in sedate frocks and picture hats.

"You are writing history," Mayor Job Cohen, who officiated, told the couples just after midnight ushered in the new law.

"This is the first civil marriage to be celebrated between two women and two men. That is unique in the world." The Dutch parliament passed the gay marriage law -- fiercely opposed by Christian parties -- late last year, along with legislation allowing gays and lesbians to adopt children.

Seven soberly dressed Christian protestors holding placards urging: "Come, let us return to the Lord." But for Louis Rogmans, 63, about to wed his 72-year-old partner Ton Jansen, nothing could spoil the moment. "We've asked people not to bother buying us presents. It sounds corny but this is the

biggest present we could have," said Rogmans, who like his boyfriend of 36 years sported a tuxedo and pink bow tie. Asked what he expected of their wedding night, Jansen said: "After so many years together it'll just be a normal night."

The bridal couples, all of them already legally registered partners, stood as the mayor asked each in turn: "Will you convert your partnership into a marriage and do you swear to fulfill all the duties with which the law endows marriage?"

After saying "I do," three of the couples exchanged rings.

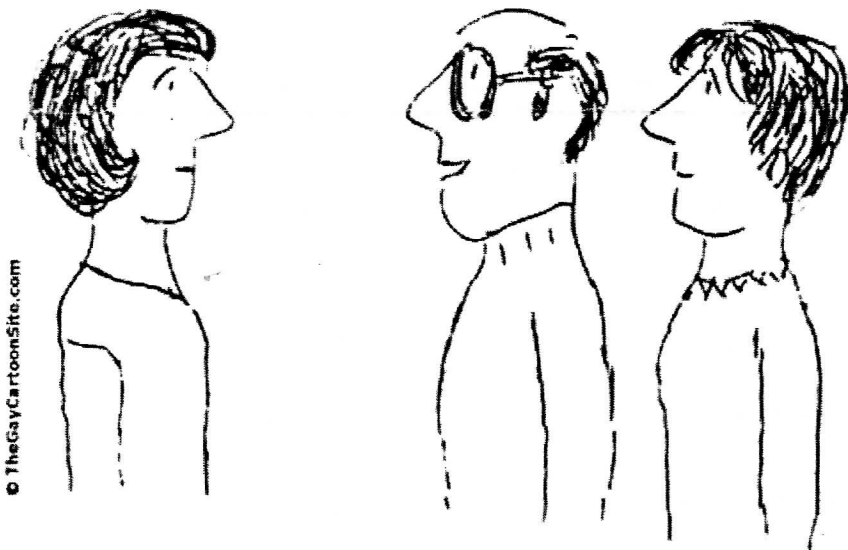
Social worker Peter Wittebrood-Lemke and schoolteacher Frank Wittebrood chose to seal their union instead by removing gaudy rings -- to reveal ring designs tattooed on their fingers.

Lesbians Helene Faasen and Anne-Marie Thus were keen to stress that theirs was no different from any other marriage. "We're not pioneers. We're just grateful we've been able to do this. Now we just want to live a normal family life," said Faasen, pushing back an ivory veil and clutching a posy of white roses that complemented her new wife's peach-colored bouquet.

Faasen's father, Peter, said she had made him proud. But he was sorry there would be no church wedding. "I'm a Catholic and with this Pope that's never going to happen," he said.

Amsterdam chief registrar Evert Geuzinge said he expected the Netherlands would now see around 10,000 gay weddings a year, or 10 percent of the average annual marriage total.

**Join us  
at the  
PRIDE  
PARADE!**



**"Your mother and I are going out right now  
to buy Martha Stewart's book on  
lesbian weddings."**

Cartoon reprinted  
with friendly permission of

**THE GAY CARTOON SITE.**

Check out their web site!

<http://www.thegaycartoonsite.com>

## A Gay Son's Father Comes Out (by Clifton Spires)

MARCH 26, 2001.

A year and half ago, my wife, Joy, and I, along with a lesbian friend, decided to form a chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) in Sandusky, a North Ohio town of about 30,000 people. Joy and I wanted to do something for Rick, 29, our gay son who disappeared from our home and our lives more than four years ago. We also did it for ourselves. When we are with other families and friends of gay people, we feel we can be completely ourselves.

I am currently county news editor for The Willard Times-Junction. I am also a freelance writer, and sometime actor. My wife, Joy, who is physically disabled, is a former newspaper editor, reporter, and police dispatcher. She is currently writing a book on how physical appearance affects the way people are treated. We also have another son, Jonathan, 18, who is straight.

Sandusky, and nearby Norwalk where we live, rely heavily on the tourist trade from nearby Lake Erie. The centerpiece of it all, after the lake, is the Cedar Point Amusement Park in Sandusky. The park is a major employer, and many other local businesses, like restaurants, hotels, souvenir shops and so on, are heavily dependent on it. Manufacturing and trucking are other important activities. The local high school team is known as the Norwalk Truckers, and their girls' marching group are the Truckerettes.

Both cities are dominated by conservative, very religious Catholic families. But except for extreme right-wing letters in the local paper, and the occasional anti-abortion demonstration, the general attitude is "don't ask, don't tell." There is also a growing amount of liberal groups, including Unitarians, pagans, and drumming circles.

When we first formed PFLAG, the local daily newspaper, The Sandusky Register, offered to do a feature on the group. We declined because we didn't feel ready for the exposure. Everyone was at different stages of "outness," and we needed time to get comfortable with each other.

By October 2000, when we marked the first birthday of our PFLAG chapter, we found we had actually met some of our first goals-to stay alive as an organization, grow in membership and affiliate nationally. Increasingly, more gay and lesbian people were joining the group, making the meetings more diverse, stimulating and fun. The simple fact of surviving that first year gave us more energy.

To celebrate our accomplishments, we contacted The Sandusky Register and accepted their offer to feature our PFLAG group. Then the question became, who would do the interviews? Joy and I were willing, but some of the parents were simply not ready to go public, or did not want to put their children at risk. Some lgbt members were afraid they'd lose their jobs if their sexual orientation was publicized.

Several months earlier, when the Register did a large article on gay people working at the nearby Cedar Point Amusement

Park, there was a big backlash from anti-gay and conservative groups. The paper was targeted by hateful phone calls and a church-organized letter-writing campaign. Even some Unitarians said, "They shouldn't have published it; it will just make people afraid to come here [to the Park]."

We also feared an article about us would instigate physical violence against ourselves and our homes, not because anything had ever happened in our peaceful communities, but because it could. Probably nobody expected violence in Laramie, Wyoming where the college student Mathew Shepherd was killed for being gay, or Jasper, Texas where James Byrd, Jr. was brutally murdered because of his race.

We kept on going despite our fears, and in the end, there were seven PFLAG members at the interview with The Register: two sets of parents, our lesbian co-founder and one gay man who would talk, but not be identified by name, and our treasurer, a woman who fell into the category of "friend." As the evening wore on, all of us, PFLAG members and reporters, realized that we were doing something very important.

This wasn't your typical newspaper story about politics or crime or money or cute little kids selling lemonade. It was about people showing by example that acceptance and tolerance is the only path for all of us to take.

My heart soared listening to our group. My wife, the group's President, spoke with gentle and articulate passion. Our friends, Liz and Ron, eloquently expressed how much they love their gay son, Aaron, and how they have the same hopes and concerns for him that they have for their other children. The gay and lesbian representatives, whom we jokingly pseudonamed "Will" and "Ellen," spoke courageously about their own lives and on behalf of millions of other gay and lesbian people. Mary, our treasurer, explained that gay outreach and acceptance is part of her calling as a Christian.

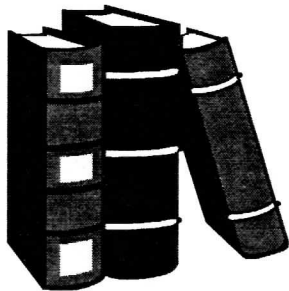
We waited tensely until the article was published, nearly a week later. On Wednesday, January 31, 2001, I got up at 6a.m., drove down to the nearest service station and checked for The Sandusky Register. On the front page, above the fold, was my picture, holding a large photograph of our gay son, Rick. The headline was, "Love, not judgment."

Nothing was sensationalized. Nothing was embarrassing. PFLAG's goals were accurately discussed, and the icing on the cake came the following Sunday when The Register ran an editorial commending the presence of PFLAG in the Sandusky community, and wishing its members well.

To date, there have been no hate messages on our telephone answering machine, or on the e-mail address we set up to field such messages. We have received a few inquiries from people who wanted help in accepting a gay loved one, or just wanted to be part of a positive movement.

It took a year of preparation for Sandusky/Firelands PFLAG's official "outing." It was time well-spent.

# OFF THE BOOK-RACK



## "friends & family"

### True Stories of Gay America's Straight Allies

By Dan Woog

ISBN 1-55583-491-4

"People say gays shouldn't be role models. Well, my dad went to Catholic school, and he didn't become a nun!" Read what else 14-year old Steven Cozza has to say in his fight to combat homophobia.

"Dad, could you have remained celibate your whole life if you had to?" asks 23-year old Brad his dad.

"Discrimination against gay people is the most insidious form of all prejudice. It's the only one I know that turns parents against their kids." Says lawyer Dan Foley, who worked on the "gay marriage" case that shook Hawaii.

"I don't believe I'll live to see the day when my son can walk down the street in Arkansas holding his partner's hand without endangering their lives, but I do think someday it will happen", says Carolyn Wagner, whose son was beaten up in school, while several of his friends - male and female - received death threats.

"If people didn't feel they had to get married because society says that's the one right way to live, then we wouldn't have all these coming-out-in-the-middle-of-marriage tragedies in the first place," says Amity Pierce Buxton, who separated from her husband after 24 years of marriage.

On April 6, 1995, 17-year old Bill was beaten unconscious near his high school. On May 8, he took his life. Bill's mom created a web site in memory of her son and since then has been busy with responding to the e-mails she receives from people from all walks of life. <http://members.tripod.com/~claytoly/index.html>

Kirsten Kingdon, Executive Director of PFLAG about this book: "Tens of thousands of PFLAG families nationwide know the profound impact of our personal stories - testimonials of unconditional love like those in Dan Woog's powerful new book. I defy any American - gay or straight, accepting or fearful - to read this book without being deeply moved."

Some of the stories are encouraging, some are sad, some are moving, some are tragic, but they all have one thing in common: they are about people who care and who did not give up even when faced with extreme challenges in our homophobic society. Because it is not a question of being gay or straight; female, male or transgender; it is a question of how we treat each other as human beings. "Turn your scars into stars." - and this is what these extraordinary people have done by telling their stories.

Printed in LA Times / April 13, 2001 / Letter to the Editor:

How wonderful it was to read Frank's column on same-gender marriage. As a mother of a son who is gay, I would love to have the pleasure of helping to plan his wedding to the person he wants to share his life and love with. I would also like to be able to proudly announce his impending wedding date, just as I have been able to do for our youngest daughter, who is planning a fall wedding. It's outrageous that in the United States we still discriminate against millions of American citizens who pay taxes and lead productive and contributing lives. My husband and I have fought against this injustice for years. The time has come for all of us to step out of our own closets and demand that equal justice and opportunity be available to all our citizens. I will be visiting Amsterdam and spending my tourist dollars there, since they certainly understand that everyone gets to have access to all.

LYNETTE SPERBER, Sherman Oaks