



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

April-May 2002

Newsletter 216

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 3rd 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 - 3rd floor. There is also easy access from the north driveway. Doors open at 6:30 pm; general meeting begins at 7:25 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

April 16, 2002

Norma Bowles is the editor of "COOTIE SHOTS - Theatrical Inoculations against Bigotry for Kids, Parents and Teachers" and the Founder and Artistic Director of Fringe Benefits Theatre, which is dedicated to building bridges between gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth and their straight peers, teachers and families. Come hear about the story behind the book and its performances as told by some of its authors.

May 21, 2002

Guy Shulman is the Director of Development for G.L.A.S.S. (Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services, Inc.) a non-profit dedicated to providing residential, psychosocial and emancipation services to homeless, runaway and throwaway youth. Find out about the work completed and challenges facing this local organization.

**Don't miss PFLAG's NATIONAL CONFERENCE: Family Voices for Equality,
September 27-29 in Columbus, OH.**

Register now at www.pflag.org to receive the early bird registration fee.

**New this year: Family Voices for Equality is being held in conjunction with Family Pride and
COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere).**

To register by phone or for information call 614-447-5105

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 & Alvin)

Area Code 909

Redlands Chapter: 335 2005 (Kathy)

Area Code 949

South Orange County: 459 2834 (Karyl)

OTHER HELPLINES / RESOURCES

Spanish Speaking:

(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

Merging Identities:

One of the National Conference for Community & 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

Hablando Entre Hombres

Spanish support group for Latino Gay Men

(213) 273 8723 (Ramon Ramirez)

PFLAG National

(202) 467 8180 www.pflag.org

PFLAG's Transgender Special Outreach Network (TSO):

Karen Gross (216) 691 HELP / KittenGr@aol.com

Mary Boenke (540) 890 3957 / maryboenke@aol.com

www.transfamily.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, call me at (323) 460-4849, or just drop me a note at our PFLAG meetings! Gender bender greetings, Chris Haiss

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I believe it was Gandhi who said "Be the change you want to see in the world". Those people that are in public office have that affect on us with the legislation and decisions they undertake on a daily basis. I was recently introduced to a group called Victory Fund whose mission is to increase the number of openly gay and lesbian officials nationwide. They do this by fundraising for political candidates regardless of any party affiliation. Today, when civil rights seem to be taking a back seat to other concerns of government, it is more important than ever to make sure there are people in government offices that are concerned for the needs of the GLBT community. I encourage you to visit www.victoryfund.org or write to them at 1012 14th St. NW Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005 for more information.

In January PFLAG Los Angeles held a one-day training session for our speakers' bureau. Members of our speakers' bureau volunteer their time to speak to high school and college students and share their "coming out" stories. This is just an example of some of the behind the scene work PFLAG is involved with on a daily basis. I was very encouraged by the turnout at the training session (more than 35 speakers trained) and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who made the day possible. I also want to encourage those reading our newsletter to patronize the West Hollywood businesses that made contributions for our training session; Koo Koo Roo Restaurant, Pavilions, and Starbucks. Finally a big THANK YOU to all the volunteers and past speakers that gave their time that day to train all the new attendees.

We have some terrific speakers lined up for the upcoming monthly meetings. I encourage our members to come and participate in our rap sessions and then stay to hear these wonderful speakers. It makes a big difference to those who are attending PFLAG meetings for the first time.

George Unger - Co-President PFLAG Los Angeles

Speaker's Training Seminar

As one of those who helped put together the first PFLAG Speaker's Training Seminar, I know only too well the blood, sweat and toil that goes into such an endeavor.

On Saturday, January 26, 2002, I attended the training seminar that our co-president, George Unger, put together. I want to commend him on a job well done!

The program was well coordinated, meaningful, and contained excellent materials. He also had a terrific group of volunteers helping him to make this such an important day. From my participation, I could see that the new speakers were enthusiastic, well briefed, and very astute in key areas of public speaking. They were willing to share their stories openly, honestly and courageously, and do all that in 4 minutes! I found the seminar to be a great learning tool.

Also, big kudos to Andy Birnbaum and Ron Elecciri for their terrific work in keeping the Speaker's Bureau's engagements going, and participating so completely in Saturday's training session.

Larry Sperber

LAW & ORDER

February 21, 1976

In Detroit, \$200,000 in damages were awarded to a man who claimed that he was turned into a homosexual as a result of an auto accident in which he was rear-ended (no pun intended).

From Lisa Diguardi's "This Day in Gay History"

"Divas' Revenge - Opera Our Way II"

The Gay Mens's Chorus of Los Angeles
Spring Concert

"Divas' Revenge - Opera Our Way II"

April 5-7th - Alex Theatre, Glendale
Info and tickets - 1-800-636-7464

Please mention that you are a member of PFLAG

New York Times - February 4, 2002 (Excerpts)

American Academy of Pediatrics Backs Gays Who Seek to Adopt a Partner's Child

By ERICA GOODE

The American Academy of Pediatrics, which offers guidance to parents on child-rearing issues from spanking to nutrition, is announcing its support today for the right of gay men and lesbians to adopt their partners' children.

"Children who are born to or adopted by one member of a same-sex couple deserve the security of two legally recognized parents," the academy says in a policy statement published in its scientific journal, *Pediatrics*.

The organization issued its statement after a committee reviewed two decades of studies. Most, it said, found that the children of gay or lesbian parents were as well adjusted socially and psychologically as the children of heterosexual parents.

The issue of so-called second-parent adoptions has been fiercely contested in many states. Three states effectively ban such adoptions, seven states and Washington, D.C., permit them by law or court ruling, and otherwise the legal status of such adoptions varies widely.

But many experts said the academy's endorsement was likely to carry weight in courts and legislatures because the group, which represents 55,000 pediatricians, enjoys wide respect.

Legalizing second-parent adoptions, the academy said in its statement, is in the best interest of children because it guarantees the same rights and protections to homosexual families that are routinely accorded to heterosexual parents and their children. For example, legal adoption ensures that a child will have access to health insurance benefits from both parents and to Social Security survivor benefits should either parent die, and that a continuing legal relationship with both parents will exist even if the parents separate, influencing matters like custody, visiting rights and child support.

"This is really about the needs of children," said Dr. Joseph Hagan, a pediatrician in private practice in Vermont and chairman of the academy's committee on psychosocial aspects of child and family health, which drafted the policy statement.

Dr. Ellen Perrin, a professor of pediatrics at Tufts New England Medical Center who was a consultant to the committee, said it had become clear to the academy "that children whose parents happen to be gay or lesbian were lacking some of the security that other children can assume."

The academy's policy is being praised by gay rights organizations. Patricia M. Logue, a senior counsel and family law expert for the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, a national gay rights group, said the pediatricians' support was important because "a lot of the problem out there is that people are just not familiar with our families and they operate out of fear."

But Kenneth Connor, president of the Family Research Council, a group concerned with marriage and family issues, called it "regrettable that the academy has succumbed to political correctness and has abandoned substantive research."

Mr. Connor said his organization opposes any form of gay adoption because "it trivializes the contribution that each gender, male and female alike, make to the physical, emotional and psychosocial development of their children."

Most children of same-sex couples have only one legal parent, the parent who gave birth to or adopted them. The other, or second, parent must petition for adoption to establish a legally binding relationship with the child.

Many states have left decisions about second-parent adoptions to the courts. But three states — Vermont, Connecticut and California — have passed laws specifically allowing gay men and lesbians to adopt their partners' children. In four other states — Illinois, New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts — and Washington, D.C., appellate courts have sanctioned the right to such adoptions.

By contrast, Florida prohibits gay men or lesbians from adopting children under any circumstances. Laws in two other states, Mississippi and Utah, effectively ban second-parent adoptions.

For Betsy Smith, 41, the executive director of a nonprofit organization in Boston, such geographical distinctions have meant staying in Massachusetts, where the Supreme Court has deemed second-parent adoptions legal, instead of moving back to Maine, where she and her partner are from, but where no court is known to have granted such an adoption.

Ms. Smith's partner, Jennifer Hoopes, gave birth to a boy, Justin, on Dec. 22 last year, and Ms. Smith is adopting him.

In its statement, the pediatrics academy noted that "a large body of professional literature provides evidence that children with parents who are homosexual can have the same advantages for health, adjustment and development as can children whose parents are heterosexual." A short report summarizing that literature accompanied the policy statement in the journal.

The academy also recommended in its statement that pediatricians familiarize themselves with the research and that they "advocate for initiatives that establish permanency through co-parent or second-parent adoption for children of same sex partners."

Dr. Judith Stacey, a professor of sociology at the University of California, agreed that the evidence that children of gay or lesbian parents incur no harm is convincing.

She said that other professional organizations, including the American Psychological Association, have filed briefs on behalf of gay or lesbian parents in adoption cases or have passed resolutions endorsing such adoptions. Still, she said, the pediatricians' statement will be particularly influential "because they are generally regarded as not a radical group and they have a hands-on connection with kids."

For her part, Dr. Stacey said "history indicates" that the legalization of second-parent adoption "is eventually going to happen, and it is certainly happening internationally and in all the other advanced industrial nations."

"People are already doing this, de facto," she said. "The question is are you going to give parents the same rights, and therefore the kids the same rights, and the same stability in their connection to their parents that other kids have?"

FAMILY DAY IN THE PARK

Come join us for an outdoor family event!

Kids and adults can enjoy games, arts & crafts,
a bagel brunch and expert face painting!

Third Saturday of every month from 10am-noon
at West Hollywood Park, 626 N Robertson Blvd.

For information call 323-860-7397

SPREADING THE WORD IN THE COMMUNITY

- Lynette spoke in Professor Linda Garnets class at UCLA, along with Sharon Fane, and Harold & Ellen Kameya.
- Lynette and Larry have become involved with the Marriage Coalition to see laws and legislation change with regard to Same Gender Marriage. They are Board Members of MECA (Marriage Equality California / <http://www.marriageequality.org>), and participate in the Marriage Coalition comprised of Lambda Legal, the Gay and Lesbian Center, leaders in the faith community, and MECA.
- Lynette attended a Marriage Equality gathering at West Hollywood Presbyterian Church with the Faith Community.
- Lynette and Larry spoke to the Lesbian Women's Conversation group and the Gay Men's Chat group at the Village.
- Lynette and Larry spoke at a rally and mock marriage for same gender couples at the Third Street Promenade hosted by MECA.
- Larry and Lynette spoke at USC to Graduate Students in Social Work.
- Lynette and Larry attended Police Chief Bernard Parks' Gay and Lesbian Advisory Forum.

SAVE THE DATE - Sunday June 23rd
Christopher St West Pride Parade (West Hollywood)
Come join us that Sunday Morning and walk with PFLAG

LAW & ORDER

Supreme Court Of Alabama, February 15, 2002:

..."Homosexual conduct is, and has been, considered abhorrent, immoral, detestable, a crime against nature, and a violation of the laws of nature and of nature's God upon which this Nation and our laws are predicated. Such conduct violates both the criminal and civil laws of this State and is destructive to a basic building block of society -- the family. It is an inherent evil against which children must be protected."...

[Note from the editor: Let's not forget: Homosexuality occurs in nature; this great nation was built on separation of religion and government (verdicts based on religious beliefs usually occur in theocracies); and concluding that a gay/lesbian family member needs to be excluded to preserve the family is a contradiction in itself. No?]

PROJECT PRIDE

Afternoon Drop-In Social
 Center for Lesbian/Gay/
 Bisexual Teens, ages 13-18
 sponsored by:

Jewish Family Service of
 Santa Monica

1424 4th Street 2nd Floor --
 JUST OFF THE
 PROMENADE,
 Santa Monica

4:30pm - 6:30pm, Sundays

**KICKOFF AFTERNOON -
 MARCH 24!!!!**

Come be a part of the start:
 Help Set the Goals for
 YOUR Center!

JFS Santa Monica:
 310.393.0732

Queen greeted by transsexual lawmaker

Queen Elizabeth II was greeted in New Zealand on Thursday, February 21, 2002, by the country's first transsexual lawmaker.

Accompanied by her husband, Prince Philip, the 75-year-old queen stepped off her plane at Wellington airport to be officially welcomed by New Zealand officials. Among the dignitaries on the tarmac was Georgina Beyer, a former male sex worker who entered New Zealand's parliament in the last election. Beyer, who underwent sex reassignment surgery more than 20 years ago, is the world's first transgender member of a national legislature.

Don't 'Protect' Me; Give Me Your Respect –

Growing up with a gay father wasn't easy – but only because our society doesn't accept families like mine

By Abigail Garner / NEWSWEEK, February 11, 2002

To me, the seemingly benign question, "What do you do?" is anything but small talk. The stranger sitting next to me on a recent flight to southern California asked me that very question.

I could have made up an answer, just to avoid a potentially tense situation. But I answered honestly, "I'm an advocate for gay and lesbian families." He looked confused so I gave him a little more information. "I talk and write about the experiences of children growing up with gay and lesbian parents."

I travel frequently for my job, so I've been in this situation before. In the best cases, answering this question opens the door to a discussion, regardless of whether the person supports the idea of gay parents raising children.

But occasionally, the passenger next to me responds with silence. That's what happened this time. He looked at me, blinked and then sat back in his seat, staring straight ahead. Finally he grabbed the magazine in the seat pocket in front of him and opened it. His body language, roughly translated, meant, "I did not buy a perfectly good seat on this airplane so that I could sit next to some lesbian."

Or at least I'm guessing he thought I'm a lesbian. When I tell people what I do, most think I am. But for those who are open to talking with me, I usually reveal that I'm heterosexual. My dedication to gay and lesbian issues grew from the love and pride and rage and fear I experienced growing up in a "nontraditional" family.

When I was 5, my father came out as gay to his family and friends and moved in with another man. By the time I entered elementary school, I was learning about the cruelty of homophobia. "Faggot" was the favorite put-down among the boys in my class. I didn't know what it meant until my parents explained that it was a mean way of saying someone was gay. Since my classmates seemed to be so hostile about gay people, I decided I should keep quiet about my family.

People who knew me then are surprised by my outspokenness. "Can't you move on?" they ask. But I am driven to speak about my past because the consequences feel less risky now that I'm an adult. I no longer worry about people who might try to "protect" me from my father by taking me away from him. I don't have to worry every time we go out: is this the time he gets "caught"? I remember when I was about 8, I was walking down the street between my father and his partner and holding both of their hands. It felt dangerous, because by standing as a link between them I was "outing" them. What would happen if others realized my dad was gay? Would he lose his job? Get beaten up? Be declared an unfit parent?

While the threat of being separated from him was never real, I spent plenty of time worrying about it. Fortunately, my mother (who is heterosexual) made no attempt to limit my father's custody rights. If she had, she probably would have gained full custody. Our courts have a history of favoring straight parents over gay ones in custody battles.

My parents did their best to make me feel good about where I came from. They told me that even though they were divorced and my dad was gay, we were no less valid than any other family. But they could do nothing about the abundance of negative messages about homosexuality that I interpreted as direct attacks on my family.

Why did so many people – including TV evangelists and talk-show guests – think that my dad was such a terrible person? They didn't even know him. While my friends had monsters keeping them awake at night, I lost sleep over the anti-gay rhetoric spouted by right-wing politicians.

College marked a significant change in my life. The 1,500 miles between home and school gave me the distance I needed to figure out who I was, separate from my parents. I thought I had outgrown the label of "daughter from a gay family." Soon after I graduated, however, I connected with a group of teens with gay and lesbian parents while volunteering for a youth organization. When I realized how similar their stories were to mine, I was inspired to start talking openly about my own experiences.

When I do speak, many people assume I'm a lesbian. And for those who don't respect homosexuals, it's the only reason they need to dismiss my arguments for gay rights. Once I identify myself as straight, however, I'll watch their rigid, angry faces soften to ask me questions. I'll see the handful of college students in the audience who were rolling their eyes sit up and listen. It gives me hope that they'll hear my message: it wasn't having a gay father that made growing up a challenge, it was navigating a society that did not accept him and, by extension, me.

Maybe my companion on that California flight would have been open to what I had to say if I had told him I'm straight. I'll never know. As for the silence between us for the rest of the trip, I heard it loud and clear.

February 8, 2002

NEW YORK, NY--The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, or GLSEN, today praised the nation's largest teachers' union for setting a new standard in addressing anti-gay harassment and abuse in America's schools.

On Friday, February 8, the National Education Association's (NEA) Board of Directors adopted a series of task force recommendations that among other things will encourage the adoption of inclusive anti-harassment policies and development of factual materials for classroom and community discussion on these issues.

"The NEA's commitment to creating learning environments in which all students and staff can reach their academic or professional potential has never been more clear," stated GLSEN Executive Director Kevin Jennings. "These powerful new recommendations signal that help is on the way for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students and staff who experience day-to-day abuse in America's schools."

Transsexual's mother: 'I was blessed twice' (Excerpts)

By Matt Bean, January 23, 2002, <http://www.courtstv.com>

The mother of a transsexual who is fighting for custody of his children testified Wednesday that a sex change operation did not change the way she felt about her child. "I feel that I was blessed twice," said Irene Kantaras, 75. "Now I'm blessed with a young man who has compassion, honor, integrity — I don't think anything else counts. He's never given us a day to doubt who he is."

Irene Kantaras told the court that even as a child, Michael Kantaras displayed a masculine side. Her son had an aversion for girlish things, Kantaras testified. "I think I bought him [a doll] one Christmas, and he then went and threw it to his other sister Kathy and said, 'Here, you know what to do with these.'" He also disliked girl's clothes. "Michael had a habit of passing out on me every time I put dresses on him," she testified. All of these likes and dislikes finally made sense to Irene Kantaras when her son told her about his decision to have a sex change. At first, the revelation was a shock, she said, but now, "Michael is Michael to me... He's been Michael for 15 years."

He was Michael when he married Linda Kantaras in 1989. The 33-year-old schoolteacher — who knew her husband had been born Margo Kantaras — already had a son, Matthew. Kantaras adopted Matthew that year, and the couple had a second child, Irena, in 1992 using sperm from Michael Kantaras' brother.

Linda Kantaras' central claim in the case is that her husband, who underwent hormone therapy and the removal of his uterus and ovaries, is still a woman because he hasn't taken the final step — replacing his vagina with a surgically grafted penis. She has argued that their marriage is therefore void under a 1998 Florida law banning same-sex marriages.

Lawyers for Michael Kantaras, however, say that the process of "sexual reassignment" should not require phalloplasty — the surgical implantation of a penis made from skin and fat taken from the patient's own body — because the process is costly, dangerous and often unsuccessful. His lawyers have also tried to paint their client as a loving father.

Michael Kantaras' father, John Kantaras, testified that in 1998, after the couple had separated, he often took groceries to Linda Kantaras and the children at Michael's request. But in July 1998, he went to the house but was left standing on the porch. "Nobody opened the door," he testified. "I feel terrible to go to my daughter's house and can't even see my grandchildren."

Pam Thomas, sister of Sherrie Noodwang — the woman with whom Michael Kantaras was allegedly having the affair that caused him to seek a divorce in 1998 — testified that Michael Kantaras got on well with her children and his own. They all really liked him," Noodwang said. "He was very witty, funny and relaxed." Thomas also told the court that on July 4, 1999, Linda Kantaras confronted her in her home. "I told her she had no business being there, and she said, 'Well, [your sister] broke up my family,'" Thomas said. "I took Sherri by the arm and said 'Sherri let's go in the house.' [Linda Kantaras] said, 'Well do you know your sister is a lesbian and Michael's a woman?'"

The Anatomy of 'Man'

Also testifying Wednesday was a medical doctor who was involved in Michael Kantaras' physical transformation. "Surgery is not a piece of cake," testified Ted Huang, a doctor who has treated more than 120 female-to-male transsexuals. Some surgery is necessary, Huang said. "When a patient has a problem with their own sex identification, the only treatment that is effective is to try to change the body configuration to fit their mind." But when Karen Doering, the lawyer for Michael Kantaras asked the doctor, "Is a penis necessary to make someone a man?" the surgeon replied, "No." Referring at times to the implanted penis as a "meat tube," a "sausage" and a "pee-pee pipe," Huang differentiated between breast removal surgery, which he said nearly all of his patients chose to undergo, and phalloplasty, which he had only performed on 15 of his patients.

According to Huang, the procedure can sideline a patient for more than a year, and leaves him with a penis that is functional neither as a sexual tool nor as a conduit for urine. The result of this surgery "at best would be a tube of skin and meat hanging in between your legs," Huang said. To have sex, Huang said, the patient would have to insert a stiff plastic rod into the phallus. Even then, the surgeon testified, "the whole segment of that meat tube can go in and out of the vaginal [cavity] but the patient does not know whether it's in or out. In the true sense of sexual intercourse, it really does not take place."

And with time, Huang added, the phallus would degrade as the fat layers changed shape. "Even though the patient may be happy soon after surgery, with time it will change," the doctor said. After a while, he said, "to me it kind of looks like a dried-up cucumber."

Through his testimony, Huang implied that Michael Kantaras has taken his sex change operation as far as should be required under Florida law for him to be declared male.

(FYI - The court decision is not expected before end of March/beginning of April.)

DID YOU KNOW?

Historically, *celibate* means only "unmarried"; its use to mean "abstaining from sexual intercourse" is a 20th-century development.

--The American Heritage Dictionary of The English Language, Third Edition, 1992--

LAW & ORDER

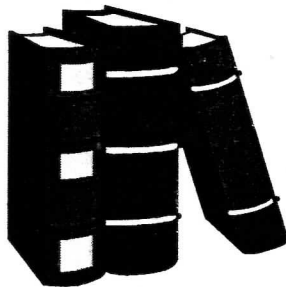
Thursday, February 21, 2002:

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the state's sodomy laws do not apply to private consensual acts. The high court found that two statutes of Massachusetts law cannot be enforced against those engaged in oral or anal sex, as long as those involved did not intend it to be in public view.

AB 1326 Defeated

The bill's author and supporters attempted to portray the bill as an effort to bring back the basics into the classroom, expressing their frustration with the proliferation of diversity curriculum, and implying its connection to the low test scores of California students. Opponents of the bill pointed out the absurdity of the supporters' arguments in trying to correlate promoting diversity and low test scores. The opponents also expressed how the bill is so vague that it could lead to censorship of library books and materials, ban on gay/straight student alliances, vital counseling services for students that help prevent gay teen suicide being taken away, school counselors and teachers, often the only adults to whom students may turn, prohibited from discussing questions about sexuality or even anti-gay harassment, and health education programs, including HIV/AIDS, severely limited or eliminated.

OFF THE BOOK-RACK



"How Homophobia Hurts Children"

Nurturing Diversity
at Home, at School, and in the Community

Jean M. Baker, PhD

224 pages, \$24.95, paperback, ISBN 1-56023-164-5
Harrington Park Press

"I was around thirteen when I realized what I was and the more I found out, the more scared I became, how it was in society and the family." (18-year old girl)

"Someday I want to get beyond that gay football captain, but for now I need to get out there and show these machismo athletes who run high schools that you don't have to do drama or be a drum major to be gay. It could be someone who looks just like them." (Corey Johnson)

"Gay people are victims not of the Bible, not of religion, and not of the church, but of people who use religion as a way to devalue and deform those whom they can neither ignore nor convert." (Rev. Peter J. Gomes)

Though many believe that there are no gay children, these children do exist and their minds and souls are shaped as they gradually grow in the awareness that they belong to a group disdained by many, sometimes even by the people closest to them - their own families. Too many even come to feel that suicide is the only alternative to life as a homosexual. Somehow, in the midst of the antigay rhetoric, a very simple fact gets lost: the fact that in every society there are and will always be individuals who fall in love with persons of their same gender.

This book takes a closer look at what it means to grow up in a homophobic culture and how this affects gay children as well as nongay children. Homophobia affects us all. The book sheds light on the impact parents, teachers, politicians, clergy, and therapists have on this subject. It tries to explain why most parents do not allow even the glimmer of a thought that they themselves might have a gay or lesbian child and why they don't help. It reminds us of Bobby Griffith, who, at age 20, jumped off a bridge onto a freeway and died instantly when he was hit by a large tractor trailer and his mother who came to feel that her efforts to save her son from damnation had helped drive him to suicide.

Dr. Baker goes into the myths and fallacies about being gay -- homosexuality is a mental illness, homosexuality can be cured, it's a choice, homosexuals are child molesters, homosexuals will convert children to homosexuality -- and how damaging it is for society at large to keep these myths alive.

Read about: Why should parents come out; what does research show; personal stories; family reactions to gay children coming out; what happens to gay children at school; harassment of gays in schools; cultural permission for antigay harassment; the hidden gay students; actions schools can take; mental health professionals and their policies; legal and social policy barriers and how they affect gay children; antidiscrimination policies; gays in the military; archaic sex laws and why these are applied in many cases to homosexuals only; Boy Scout Policies; antigay hate crimes; ...

Two chapters out of the 18 focus on transgender identity and personal stories of transsexuals growing up.

Kirsten Kingdon, Executive Director, PFLAG, about this book:

"A comprehensive look at the overwhelming challenges facing GLBT youth; offers concrete steps for making our homes, schools, and communities safer for all children. Dr. Baker presents successful practices and policies that have made a difference and can be implemented in communities nationwide."