



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

August-September 2003

Newsletter 224

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 7:15 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.

OUR NEXT SPEAKERS

August 19, 2003

Dr. Ronni Sanlo - Director of the LGBT Resource Center at the University of California Los Angeles.

September 16, 2003

Paul Koretz - California Assemblymember of the 42nd District that includes West Hollywood.

AB 17 AND AB 205 PASS SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE!!!

On July 1, the California Senate Judiciary Committee passed both AB 17 and AB 205.

AB 17 would prohibit the state from spending tax dollars on contracts with companies who discriminate against employees with domestic partners. AB 205 would extend nearly all of the state rights and responsibilities of marriage to registered domestic partners.

AB 205 will be heard by the Tax and Finance Committee on July 9.
AB 17 has not yet been scheduled for hearing by the Appropriations committee,
which is its next stop in the Senate.

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 (Joyce)

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

Claremont Chapter: 624 6134

Colton: 825 8368 (Norma)

Redlands Chapter: 335 2005 (Kathy)

Area Code 949

South Orange County: 459 2834 (Karyl)

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

Deadline for submissions: September 1
(October/November issue)

OTHER HELPLINES / RESOURCES

African American:

(323) 270 5493 (Glynis)

(323) 731 0888 (Shirley)

Asian Pacific Islander:

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

Spanish Speaking:

(818) 243 5306 (Leonor)

LA Gay & Lesbian Center:

(323) 993 7400

Straight Spouses:

(626) 449 3267 (Onnolee)

The TREVOR PROJECT

24-hour nationwide suicide prevention line for GLBT and Questioning youth.

(866) 4 U TREVOR

www.thetrevorproject.org

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

PFLAG/LA Speakers Bureau / Contact Ron & Andy
andynron@adelphia.net

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Don't forget to write Governor Davis!!! A handwritten note to Sacramento does wonders to show our support for AB 205. As we go to press AB 205 is expected to pass the California Senate and appear on the Governor's desk in a few months. This bill would extend many rights afforded to married couples to those who are registered as domestic partners. Your handwritten note will make a big difference in supporting this measure.

I was happy to hear that the Supreme Court ruled favorably (6-3) in outlawing Texas' Sodomy Law. There was much cause for celebration as the law has been on the books for far too long. My joy was tempered by the fact that same sex couples still can't visit each other in certain hospitals, get married or even serve openly in this country's military. It was very encouraging to hear the news about gay marriage in Canada, and to follow what that means to those same sex married couples and how they will be treated in this country. Most U.S. politicians would rather avoid this issue of gay unions, but with Canada taking the lead and the Massachusetts Supreme court on the brink of making a decision on this same topic, the issue will not, thankfully, go away. What may have seemed like a dream just 10 years ago, is now reality in Canada and a few European countries. Let's hope that we can continue to make progress by letting our voices be heard.

George Unger - Co-President PFLAG Los Angeles

Canada to Allow Same-Sex Marriage

By COLIN McCLELLAND

June 17, 2003 - TORONTO - Canada will change its law to allow homosexual marriage, joining Belgium and The Netherlands as the only countries where same-sex couples can legally wed, Prime Minister Jean Chretien announced Tuesday.

The announcement means the government decided against appealing recent court rulings that declared the nation's definition of marriage as unconstitutional because it specified the union of a man and woman.

An Ontario appeals court last week declared that wording invalid, changing it to a union between two people.

"There is an evolution of society," Chretien said in making the announcement after a Cabinet meeting. He said the law would allow religions the right to decide what marriages should be sanctified.

An Anglican diocese in Vancouver has approved a blessing for same-sex unions, which it says is separate from marriage. The blessing ceremony, performed once so far, caused a split in the diocese with some churches dissociating themselves.

Opinion polls indicate a slight majority of Canadians favor legalizing same-sex marriages.

Justice Minister Martin Cauchon said Tuesday it was time for change.

The new law would redefine marriage as called for by the courts while protecting religious freedoms, according to Cauchon. "We're talking about essential freedoms here," he said.

Dozens of homosexual couples have obtained marriage licenses in the week since the court ruling, with at least one wedding taking place.

In the United States, homosexual marriage lacks full legal recognition in all 50 states. "Americans now have the chance to see a society can treat gay people with respect," said Evan Wolfson, executive director of the New York-based Freedom to Marry organization promoting homosexual marriage. "Families are helped, and no one is hurt."

Supreme Court Strikes Down Sodomy Laws

By ANNE GEARAN, Associated Press Writer / June 26, 2003

The Supreme Court struck down a ban on gay sex Thursday, ruling that the law was an unconstitutional violation of privacy. The 6-3 ruling reverses course from a ruling 17 years ago that states could punish homosexuals for what such laws historically called deviant sex.

Laws forbidding homosexual sex, once universal, now are rare. Those on the books are rarely enforced but underpin other kinds of discrimination, lawyers for two Texas men had argued to the court.

The men "are entitled to respect for their private lives," Kennedy wrote. "The state cannot demean their existence or control their destiny by making their private sexual conduct a crime," he said.

Justices John Paul Stevens, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer agreed with Kennedy in full. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor agreed with the outcome of the case but not all of Kennedy's rationale.

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas dissented.

"The court has largely signed on to the so-called homosexual agenda," Scalia wrote for the three. He took the unusual step of reading his dissent from the bench. "The court has taken sides in the culture war," Scalia said, adding that he has "nothing against homosexuals."

The two men at the heart of the case, John Geddes Lawrence and Tyron Garner, have retreated from public view. They were each fined \$200 and spent a night in jail for the misdemeanor sex charge in 1998.

The case began when a neighbor with a grudge faked a distress call to police, telling them that a man was "going crazy" in Lawrence's apartment. Police went to the apartment, pushed open the door and found the two men having anal sex.

As recently as 1960, every state had an anti-sodomy law. In 37 states, the statutes have been repealed by lawmakers or blocked by state courts.

Of the 13 states with sodomy laws, four — Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri — prohibit oral and anal sex between same-sex couples. The other nine ban consensual sodomy for everyone: Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Utah and Virginia.

Thursday's ruling apparently invalidates those laws as well.

The Supreme Court was widely criticized 17 years ago when it upheld an antisodomy law similar to Texas'. The ruling became a rallying point for gay activists.

Of the nine justices who ruled on the 1986 case, only three remain on the court. Rehnquist was in the majority in that case — *Bowers v. Hardwick* — as was O'Connor. Stevens dissented.

A long list of legal and medical groups joined gay rights and human rights supporters in backing the Texas men. Many friend-of-the-court briefs argued that times have changed since 1986, and that the court should catch up.

At the time of the court's earlier ruling, 24 states criminalized such behavior. States that have since repealed the laws include Georgia, where the 1986 case arose.

Texas defended its sodomy law as in keeping with the state's interest in protecting marriage and child-rearing. Homosexual sodomy, the state argued in legal papers, "has nothing to do with marriage or conception or parenthood and it is not on a par with these sacred choices."

The state had urged the court to draw a constitutional line "at the threshold of the marital bedroom."

Although Texas itself did not make the argument, some of the state's supporters told the justices in friend-of-the-court filings that invalidating sodomy laws could take the court down the path of allowing same-sex marriage.

[Note from the editor: I question the validity of the arguments of "protecting marriage" and "sacred choices" at a time when many Americans don't seem to have a problem with making game shows such as "Joe Millionaire" and "Married By America" out of the "sacred" institution of marriage. Giving a religious blessing to a couple is one thing; CIVIL marriage is another thing. Or are immigration rights, tax matters, retirement issues, and property management, just to name a few, SACRED matters?]

SPREADING THE WORD IN THE COMMUNITY

- Jenn Kennedy, Karen Mason, Bill Mochon, Marty Olson, and Pete Winn spoke at Granada Hills High School.

Karen Mason, who spent the entire school day there, shares her experience as a PFLAG speaker:

People who speak for PFLAG put a face on homosexuality. Student evaluations written after PFLAG presentations prove the importance of this work. Reading the comments from some 200 ninth grade students in the life skills classes of A.J. Kakassy, a Granada Hills High School teacher who consistently invites PFLAG panels as part of his curriculum, illustrates the affect of what we do. For the first time we had an opportunity to hear from one class who had heard PFLAG speakers the previous semester. What a difference we make!

Sylvia Weisenberg, a lesbian, and I, a mom, were the only speakers for this class although Bill Mochon, a gay man, agreed to speak for a few minutes before he had to leave. After Bill's presentation, Sylvia and I both wanted to know what the students remembered from our previous visit. It turned out to be quite a bit. They also asked about Mitch Grobeson, who, on the previous panel, had described his problems as a gay man on the police department until he was fired. (He has a website: www.sgtmitch.com.) One student said she no longer used the phrase, "that's so gay," and tried to get others to change their language. Some people nodded in agreement. In the written evaluations was this from a 15-year-old ninth grader: "After your first presentation, I realized that I might be gay myself and thanks to this presentation, I may confess to everyone later on in my life."

The word that repeats over and over in the evaluations is "courage." They feel it takes courage to share such personal information in front of strangers and they appreciate it. Because I am not used to speaking in public, the first few times I spoke for PFLAG it did take courage but now it just takes scheduling and planning. Most of the questions are addressed to the gay people on the panel and as a parent, I often felt a bit irrelevant. Several comments, however, showed that students appreciated a parent who made an effort to understand their child on any issue.

The comments, which are made anonymously, are not all positive. One student wrote that homosexuality was "disgusting" and another said that even though we seemed like nice people what we were doing was "a sin against God."

The evaluations include a line asking the students to give us a grade. We mostly get A's and B's. The few who give D's and F's say the presentation is boring. The students seem to appreciate the stories we tell about specific incidents in our lives. They lose interest when we preach. They are surprised to learn that gays cannot legally marry in any state and are interested in the problems of adoption. In a number of classes, we talked about the problems of hospital visitation and end of life issues but this does not seem to register with them.

One student wrote a question he was clearly afraid to ask about why some homosexual men he sees are so flamboyant..." like I see guys that you know are gay and they talk weird. Then I see the total opposite, that I didn't even know were gay." Perhaps speakers can talk about this in future presentations.

Bill Mochon is a friend of Matthew Sheppard's mother. She wants him to remind students that is not such a big step from demeaning people in a classroom to crucifying someone on a fence post. Another speaker, Marc Winn told about being gay bashed. One way to stop hate is put a face and feelings on being gay and lesbian and different. One student wanted to know why we did not have people from different cultures. The panels are often all white.

After reading the evaluations, it is clear to me that we are doing important work but we need more places to speak and more speakers. In some classes, the students show up, dressed, with their eyes open but they are intellectually asleep. In others, the class is vibrant and alive. We may not receive instant praise and adulation but if we can touch a few students in each class we are making this world a better, safer and more understanding place.

GAY HISTORY with LISA DIGUARDI

February 25, 1982:

Wisconsin became the first state to pass a state wide gay civil rights law. The bill was signed into law by Gov. Lee S. Dreyfus (R).

GAY HISTORY with LISA DIGUARDI

September 21, 1982:

The Oklahoma state supreme court granted custody of two eleven year old boys to their gay father, stating that sexual orientation alone is not grounds to deny custody.

FAMILY DAY IN THE PARK !

Come enjoy an outdoor event for everyone in the family - mom and mom, dad and dad, single parents and the kids!

August 16 - West Hollywood Park 10am - noon

September 20 - Plummer Park 10am - noon

For more information call 323-860-7397
or e-mail familyservices@laglc.org

This was in the editorial of the LA Times. You might find Thomas' words ironic considering his dissent of the recent Supreme Court ruling. How quickly he forgets his opinions when the shoe is on another (gay) foot:

In the Texas case, there were three dissenting justices. One was Justice Thomas. In his 1991 Senate Judiciary Committee nomination hearing, Thomas testified: "I will not provide the rope for my own lynching or for further humiliation. I am not going to engage in discussions, nor will I submit to roving questions of what goes on in the most intimate parts of my private life or the sanctity of my bedroom. These are the most intimate parts of my privacy, and they will remain just that, private."

Two women, one transgender, joined in legal matrimony

by Anthony Glassman / The Cleveland Gay Peoples Chronicle

Columbus—In a completely legal, state-sanctioned same-sex marriage, Dawn Kereluik and Katheryn Neudecker were married in a civil ceremony in the Franklin County probate court on July 31, 2002.

The couple took advantage of the fact that Kereluik, as a transgendered woman, will always be viewed as a man under Ohio law. The state does not allow the sex on birth certificates to be changed, even after gender reassignment surgery. "I had to bring additional documentation, like my birth certificate, but it was worth it," Dawn Kereluik enthused.

The two were wed at about 2:45 pm, and had their reception at the Grapevine Café at 6 pm, joined by roughly 30 friends. The Franklin County probate court web site lists their marriage, with Dawn Kereluik as groom and Katheryn Neudecker as bride, although Judge Lawrence A. Belskis was more gender-neutral when the ceremony finished. "I now pronounce you married," he intoned.

Compared to the preparations involved, which included gathering documentation and checking with the court that it would allow the marriage to take place, the event itself was rather quiet, according to Dawn.

"As Mary Ann [Horton, a friend of the couple] put it, the activist in me would have liked it to have attracted more attention, but I'm glad it went off like it did," she said.

The Kereluiks' is not Ohio's first same-sex marriage. A number of couples with a transgendered member have been married around Ohio, and a Texas Supreme Court ruling that gender at birth is gender for life opened the door for two lesbian couples to contravene that state's ban on same-sex marriage.

"This isn't the first one in the state," said Horton, "but previous ones have been done quietly. I'm delighted that Dawn and Katheryn have chosen to make their marriage more visible."

"Ohio bases the right to marry on the sex on your birth certificate," she continued. "Since Ohio doesn't change birth certificates when a transsexual changes their sex, we're in an interesting situation for transsexuals: Gay and lesbian marriages are legal in Ohio but heterosexual ones aren't."

"It really highlights the absurdity of our marriage laws," she concluded. "They should either change the laws to permit all same-sex marriages or to change Ohio birth certificates."

According to Horton, only Ohio, Idaho, Tennessee and Florida bar transsexuals from altering their birth certificates after gender reassignment surgery.

A Mom's First Gay Pride March (By Andrea)

I was warned about marching in Gay Pride. I was in Portland, Oregon, last year coincidentally at the same time as their Gay Pride Festival. I hesitantly entered the booth area and sought out the PFLAG booth. My daughter had come out to me about a year before, and I finally felt ready to seek support and information. I had read about PFLAG in "Dear Abby" or some advice column like that, so I knew that they would provide what I needed.

As I picked up and put down pamphlets and books, one of the people hosting the booth asked me, "Are you a mom?". I said that I was, and she began telling me, in the nicest way, what PFLAG had to offer. She invited me to a meeting in the Portland area, and asked me where I lived so that she could locate the nearest chapter.

I told her that I lived in LA, so she gave me the web site address and some contact numbers in my area.

I then told her that I was thinking about marching in a Gay Pride Parade to show solidarity with my daughter.

"You'd better bring plenty of Kleenex, then", she said.

I had no idea what she meant. "Why? Do people spit on you or something?" I asked.

She got a soft expression on her face, like she was talking to someone of impaired intelligence, and she said, "When the crowds see the PFLAG contingent, they scream out, 'We love you', and it is so touching that most people cry, at least the first few times they march."

As she told me that, I began to tear up immediately, and realized that I was in for a more powerful experience than I was really prepared to face. I thanked her and left the display area, thinking about what she had said.

It took me another 6 months to actually get myself to a Pride parade, and it was this May, in Long Beach. I had worked in Long Beach for more than 10 years and had many Lesbian and Gay friends there, so it seemed fitting for that to be my first experience. I had also heard that their parade was smaller than the West Hollywood parade, and I thought I could better manage my feelings in a smaller crowd.

My daughter flew down from San Francisco to join me in the march. Her best friend (not gay) also wanted to march with us. It was the weekend of my daughter's 21st birthday as well, and almost 2 years since she had told me she was gay.

We joined the Long Beach PFLAG group at their gathering place, and milled around waiting for the parade to begin. Drag queens in fabulous regalia, Dykes on Bikes, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence,

a troop of gay Mouseketeers practicing synchronized cheerleader routines, and men in leather with their nude butts hanging out all swarmed around and past us, preparing for their part in the parade.

There were rainbow balloon displays, flower-bedecked "floats" (cars and flatbed trucks covered with colorful paper), and a horse-drawn carriage from Wells Fargo Bank. It was so like the small hometown parades I had seen in movies like "It's a Wonderful Life", except people were dressed funny.

When the parade was about to begin, the Orange County PFLAG people joined us, along with one family that I recognized from our own LA chapter. There were about 25 - 30 of us. As we marched along the beginning of the parade route, the crowds on the side of the road were about 4 - 5 people deep. Some were serving picnic lunches to their friends on the curb; some were even barbequing on small hibachis. Everyone was doing exactly what the Portland mom had promised: They were waving and cheering and shouting, "We love you".

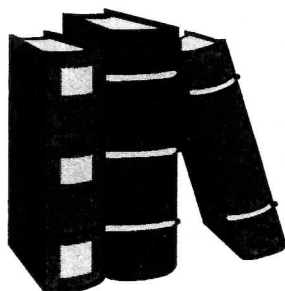
The crowds got heavier as we walked along, and the cheering got louder and louder. Some people were holding up scorecards to rate all of the floats. PFLAG got a "10" every time. Then, people started breaking out of the crowds, rushing over from the curb to kiss us or shake our hands. My daughter didn't get any of those, but I sure did. Strangers were thanking us, telling us how grateful they were that we were there.

We passed the roped-off area near the Long Beach Art Museum where the Bible-thumping Holy Rollers were standing, holding bullhorns and shouting at the marchers. "God will remember your instructions to your children", one shouted at me, I thought. There were police near them to protect them, my daughter explained.

After we had walked about a mile, the crowds were at least 10 deep, and standing shoulder to shoulder. It seemed like the spectators got younger as we got closer to the Festival site. The cheering for PFLAG also got louder. Much louder.

I began to cry when I saw some young girls, spiked hair, piercings and tattoos all over, calling out to us, "Thank you!". They looked so young; I wanted to adopt them instantly. My daughter reached over and hugged me as we walked. "I'm so lucky", she said. Then I really started to cry! But I looked over at another group and saw them each holding up one of a series of signs: "Show" "Your" "Tits". My daughter and I broke up laughing, and finished the parade with clear eyes and open hearts.

OFF THE BOOK-RACK



"Blood In My Hairspray"

Steven Schreibman

288 pages, hardcover, ISBN 1-4033-2617-7

1stBooks Library

Dear PFLAG LA

I wanted to let you know about a new book that the PFLAG chapter in Columbus, Ohio has been using as a great new tool to help bridge parents and their gay children. It's an outrageous comedy called "Blood In My Hairspray," and the members here love it!

We've had "Blood In My Hairspray" readings--featuring much laughter among the members--and continue to leverage the book's humor and characters to help create alliances between gay children and their families.

Just wanted to spread the word about something we think works!

Regards,

Shelley Smuckler / shsmuckler@earthlink.net

Brutally funny, the new novel "Blood In My Hairspray" by author Steven Schreibman captures the essence of modern gay life. Schreibman gives life to memorable characters and shares a story full of passion, pathos, and faaaaaaahulous hair.

"Blood In My Hairspray" slices its way through the world of hotshot hair stylist Damian Shtup. Damian finds himself the target of a mysterious stalker following the accidental death of a Mafia wife inside his salon. Fortunately, he's got hot-bodied cop Edgar Ramirez on his side. Together, they solve one messy crime using wits, improvised fighting skills, and sadistic humor.

The humor, characters, and plot of "Blood In My Hairspray" could not come at a better time. The gay "voice" and sensibility is everywhere in popular culture today. "Will & Grace", "Queer As Folk", and "Sex In the City", and even the musical version of "The Producers" are steeped in raucous, laugh-out-loud scenarios that appeal to audiences worldwide, not just the gay and gay-friendly segments of the population. "Blood In My Hairspray" practically bristles with whip-smart dialogue that readers will want to quote to their friends (and enemies) for years. Written to be easily adaptable to stage or screen, "Blood In My Hairspray" also offers a realistic view of life in the city today - madcap, crazy, infuriating, diverse - that celebrates modern gay life.

Formerly of Manhattan, Steven now lives in Ohio, where he toils in obscurity and dreams of finding the perfect mate. "Blood in My Hairspray" is his first novel. It can be ordered in hard cover and soft cover through Ingram, Bookazine, bookstores or online. Readers may contact Steven directly at stevenschreibman@yahoo.com if they have any questions about the book, or want to give him hell for any reason.