



Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

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

October-November 2003

Newsletter 225

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

October 21, 2003

Brent Scarpo, co-producer of the documentary "Journey to a Hate Free Millennium", has over ten years of experience as a producer, writer, director, and casting director. He has spoken at various PFLAG meetings throughout the US and was honored to receive the Colorado PFLAG Community Service Award two years ago for his work on eliminating hate. Come join us to hear this dynamic speaker!

(Please see also page 4)

November 18, 2003

Norma Bowles is the Founding Artistic Director of Fringe Benefits, a groundbreaking educational theater company offering youth the tools for constructive dialogue and action about issues of tolerance and diversity. She is also the editor of F.B.'s *Cootie Shots: Theatrical Inoculations Against Bigotry*. Come join us for a sneak preview of a powerful new play Fringe Benefits is developing for parent groups to help foster understanding and respect for LGBT youth.

(Please see also page 6)

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: November 1
(December/January 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

It seems as if there is a trend, a wave, a veritable torrent of victories for LGBT causes of late. So it would seem. Canada OKs gay marriage, and the acceptance sweeps across that country, and it all seems inevitable that we'll join the movement. Newsweek has a gay couple on the cover. Ikea, in its incredible store, has a display of furnishings for a couple first apartment. The picture of the couple is prominent: two guys. AB 105 passes and the governor signs. Two guys kiss on a nationally televised awards show and hardly anybody says anything. Madonna and Brittany does the same, on another show, and hardly anybody said much.

So, it seems as if the sanity and certainty may be upon us.

I hope so. But I'm not holding my breath. A while ago, in Anthropology I think, I learned about Revolutions. It seems there are several stages to a revolution. The next-to-last stage, just as a virtually assured major change is about to complete, is one of marked upset. The powers that have been holding on to the status quo give one last surge of resistance, not willing to give up what they know is the path of right, truth and justice. So there are fights, turmoil, upset and general discombobulation before the new replaces the old and things settle down, finally, into a next phase.

It may be a next-to-last pre-discombobulation time now. So before we reach a stage of calm acceptance of PFLAG values for the GBLT community, don't be surprised if the conservatives who know of the 'evils' we think are just obvious rights, get all upset and raise a ruckus. And we'll need to just keep on keepin' on.

So hang in folks. Let's see if maybe it may be calmer than I suspect.

Joel Hendler - Co-President PFLAG Los Angeles

Anyone who is struggling with RELIGION and GENDER issues is welcome to attend a special rap group run by three mothers of different religions. The discussion will focus on religion & homosexuality. For more information please contact Karen Mason at 323.656.9538

Q & A with Brent Scarpo

Q: How did you come up with the title "Journey to a Hate Free Millennium"?

Brent Scarpo: The title was a collaborative effort between myself and the other producer/director of the project. The concept was that it was truly HATE that was going to make or break us as a society in the new millennium.

Q: How far, in your opinion, are we still away from it? (Do you think we'll ever achieve it?)

Brent: My thought on this is that we have to believe in order to achieve. If you look throughout history, we have come a long way in all forms of Hate and the groups they affect. Who would ever think that the sodomy laws would be abolished in the US, but it happened. We have to believe in order to achieve.

Q: Why do you think people hate?

Brent: Simple: When you take a look at all the HATE in the world it comes down to one idea - SELF-HATE. "What is it that I love so little about myself that I feel a need to perpetrate a crime against another individual or myself."

Q: Why do you think some people try to justify their anti-GLBT opinion with their Christian belief while they couldn't care less about other biblical passages such as "Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death." or "Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death."?

Brent: What a loaded question. As long as there are two people in the world, you are going to have a difference of opinion. With that said, I think that those people that have anti-GLBT opinions find it much easier to rely on bits and pieces of knowledge found in a bible then they do in their own heart. I speak all over the world and get that question and I always reply in this way, "Do you really think God wanted Matthew Shepard to be tied to a fence and beaten eighteen times with a bunt of a gun crushing in brainstem. Do you really think that somewhere in the bible it taught those two men to do that to Matthew? What happened to Thou Shall Not Kill."

Q: What, in your opinion, is the biggest challenge for GLBT people here in the United States?

Brent: GREAT QUESTION: I had to think about this one. Here it is..."Being true to yourself and Coming Out". I truly believe that if every GLBT person came out we would be both accepted and unstoppable. Our biggest challenge is being true to ourselves and how it was we were born.

Q: Any thoughts on what GLBT people can do in order to protect themselves against hate crimes?

Brent: #1 REPORT THEM, REPORT THEM REPORT THEM. This is so important. If we don't report them, laws and those that protect us will not take us serious. #2 Be aware of who you are coming out to on a daily basis. Whenever I am asked if I am gay, I secretly whisper in my head two things, A. Where am I? Am I alone? Are people around? and B. Are you asking me because you want to help me or hurt me? #3 VOTE - So many of our hate crime laws are created by our votes. If there are no laws, how can we protect ourselves.

Q: Some voice the opinion that every crime is a hate crime. What's your take on that one?

Brent: Another good question. I don't think that every crime is a hate crime because not every crime involves a disenfranchised group. We need hate crime legislation not because it is going to stop people from committing hate crimes but more so the message that the US Government send each time it is denied. You see each time we debate on whether the group most victimized needs laws or not the Government is unconsciously sending a message to society saying that that particular group is not of value.

Q: Do you have a special message for our PFLAG members?

Brent: I LOVE YOU!!

CALIFORNIA BECOMES FOURTH STATE TO ENACT ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROTECTIONS FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

On August 3, 2003, California became the fourth state to ban discrimination against transgender people when California Governor Gray Davis signed AB 196, a bill amending the California Fair Employment and Housing Act to specifically include transgender employees and tenants.

The bill clarifies that California's existing ban on sex discrimination in employment and housing also prohibits discrimination based on gender stereotypes and transgender status. Shannon Minter, a board member of the Transgender Law and Policy Institute and the Legal Director for the California-based National Center for Lesbian Rights: "Transgender people seek nothing more than the opportunity to support ourselves and our families and to be treated with dignity and respect.

By enacting AB 196 into law, Californians are sending a powerful message that no person can be denied employment or housing based on gender-related characteristics that have nothing to do with their qualifications as employees or tenants."

According to Chris Daley, an attorney with the California-based Transgender Law Center, "The enactment of AB 196 sends a message of hope and equality to transgender people throughout the state. Every day, I am contacted by transgender people who have lost their jobs or their homes, simply because of who they are. It is long past time that California and other states put an end to this devastating and costly discrimination."

Three other states have enacted laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression. These are Minnesota, Rhode Island, and New Mexico.

CALIFORNIA'S HISTORIC DOMESTIC PARTNERS BILL PASSES FINAL LEGISLATIVE HURDLE

SACRAMENTO – On September 3, 2003, AB 205, the Domestic Partners Rights and Responsibilities Act of 2003, authored by Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg (D-Los Angeles), passed its final legislative hurdle when the state Assembly voted 41 - 32 to approve the version of the bill approved last week by the state Senate.

AB 205 will grant registered domestic partners nearly all of the state rights, benefits, and responsibilities currently granted only to married spouses, although the final version does not allow or require domestic partners to file joint state income taxes. Goldberg, a member of California's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Legislative Caucus, noted: "The rights and responsibilities being extended under AB 205 will further

the state's interest in promoting stable and committed family relationships. This bill will protect family members from the economic and social consequences of abandonment, separation, the death of loved ones, and other life crises. It will also protect couples, the children they are raising, third parties, and the state from numerous harms and costs."

More than 20,000 same-sex and senior opposite-sex couples have registered with the State during the three years that the domestic partner registry has been in place. Some of the significant new rights and responsibilities to be granted include child custody and child and spousal support obligations, the right to make funeral arrangements, community property and spousal support, access to family court, parenthood presumptions, state court testimonial privileges, access to married student housing, and mutual responsibility for debts.

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!

October 18 - West Hollywood Park 10am - noon

November 15 - please call for location

323-860-7397

or e-mail familyservices@laglc.org

Bride's Magazine Offers Same-Sex Union Tips July 28, 2003

A full-page article on gay weddings appears in the September-October issue of **Condé Nast's Bride's magazine**, on sale now. The piece, which discusses same-sex ceremony etiquette, marks the first time any of the five top-selling bridal magazines has published a gay-specific wedding article.

The article, titled "Outward Bound," written by freelance journalist David Toussaint, discusses same-sex ceremonies; offers advice on how to be a good guest; and urges readers "not to panic" if they are invited to a gay wedding.

OSCAR WILDE AWARD FOR COOTIES?!

by Bea Bernstein

With great "naches" (that's Yiddish for parental pride), PFLAG/LA enthusiastically announces that, on November 18 at our regular monthly meeting, we will present Fringe Benefits Artistic Director Norma Bowles with an Oscar Wilde Award. The mini-celebration will include a **SNEAK PREVIEW** of a powerful new play Fringe Benefits is developing for parent groups to help foster understanding and respect for LGBT youth.

I use the term "naches" because Norma Bowles, a member of PFLAG/LA, is one of our own and because Fringe Benefits has not only performed their plays and led workshops at PFLAG meetings, but they have also included PFLAG members' real life stories, creative input and even original plays in their tolerance-promoting theatre.

PFLAG, Los Angeles established the Oscar Wilde Awards in 1979 to honor outstanding artists, books, films, and theatre and television productions that honestly portray our children.

Past honorees include Quentin Crisp (a lifetime achievement award), *Victor Victoria* (the film starring Julie Andrews), and the playwright Mart Crowley (for his landmark production, *The Boys in the Band*).

Fringe Benefits is a groundbreaking educational theatre company offering youth tools for constructive dialogue and action about issues of tolerance and diversity. Their 12-year track record of using theatre to build bridges has earned them the commendations of educators, parents and community leaders as well as acknowledgement by the President's Commission on the Arts and Humanities. Fringe Benefits helps young people, from kindergarten through 12th grade, understand the damage caused by intolerance, and use this knowledge to address it in their own schools and communities.

Fringe Benefits' school tour plays, workshops and residencies promote respect and appreciation for all forms of diversity, including, but not limited to: race, class, culture, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, language, age and appearance. Their internationally-acclaimed *Cootie Shots: Theatrical Inoculations Against Bigotry* toured elementary schools, theatres and community centers from 1999 through 2002, reaching over 35,000 enthusiastic youth, and was recently published as an anthology of plays, songs, poems and artwork contributed by over 500 children, parents, educators and artists such as Pulitzer Prize-winner Tony Kushner, MacArthur Fellowship recipient Luis Alfaro and Academy Award winner Debra Chasnoff. Theatre companies, schools and community organizations across the nation are now using the *Cootie Shots* book as a form of early hate crime prevention.

Fringe Benefits is currently developing three different projects for parents and families, promoting tolerance towards LGBT youth. After observing *Cootie Shots'* positive impact on their children, mothers from two elementary schools in Pacoima asked Fringe Benefits to work with them to create a show to help their community understand how harmful gender bias and homophobia are to all children. Fringe Benefits worked with the mothers for nine months to develop a screenplay for a comic, but hard-hitting Spanish language video, *Mitos, Ritos y Tonterias (Myths, Rites and Silliness)*, which they've shot and are currently editing. Two plays designed for parent audiences emerged from discussions and improvisations at their Theatre Think Tank in 2002/2003. One is based on the real life experiences of a lesbian Christian couple and a heterosexual, fundamentalist Christian couple whose 9-year old daughters become best friends. The other is based on the stories of Judy Shepard, the mother of Matthew Shepard, and Mamie Till, the mother of Emmett Till, both of whose sons were murdered in savage hate crimes.

LEONARD PITTS JR. / Miami Herald / August 4, 2003

Gays may be hope for marriage

So what is it you have against gay marriage? I'm not talking to the guy next to you. He doesn't have a problem with it. No, I'm talking to you, who is fervently opposed. The number of folks who agree with you is up sharply since June, when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down anti-sodomy laws in Texas. As recently as May, 49 percent of us supported some form of gay marriage, according to The Gallup Organization. The figure has since dropped to just 40 percent. That's a precipitous decline.

So what's the problem? What is it that bothers you about gay people getting married? Don't read me that part in Leviticus where homosexuality is condemned. I mean, that same book of the Gospel mandates the death penalty for sassy kids and fortune tellers, by which standard the Osbourne children and Miss Cleo should have been iced a long time ago.

I read The Book. I believe The Book. But I also know that it's impossible to take literally every passage in The Book, unless you want to wind up in prison or a mental ward. So don't hide behind the Bible. Let's just be honest here, you and me. Why do you oppose gay marriage, really? It just feels wrong to you, doesn't it? At some visceral level, it just seems to offend something fundamental. Hey, I understand. It's one of the emotional sticking points for us heterosexual types, this primeval "ick" factor where homosexuality is concerned. I won't try to talk you out of it.

I will, though, point out that once upon a time, the same gut-level sense of wrong -- and for that matter, the same Bible -- was used to keep Jews from swimming in the community pool, women from voting and black people from riding at the front of the bus. All those things once felt as profoundly offensive to some people as gay marriage does to you right now.

The issue has been vaulted to the forefront in the last few days. Political conservatives have been galvanized by it. President Bush says he wants to "codify" marriage as a heterosexual union. And the Vatican has told Catholic legislators that they must oppose laws giving legal standing to gay unions, unions the church describes as "gravely immoral." Which is funny, given the level of sexual morality the church has demonstrated lately.

Anyway, the reasoning seems to be that gay people will damage or cheapen the sanctity of marriage and that this can't be allowed because marriage is the foundation of our society.

I agree that marriage -- and I mean legal, not common law -- is an institution of vital importance. It stabilizes communities, socializes children, helps create wealth. It is, indeed, our civilization's bedrock. But you know something? That bedrock has been crumbling for years, without homosexual help. We don't attach so much importance to marriage anymore, do we? These days, we marry less, we marry later, we divorce more. And cohabitation, whether as a prelude to, or a substitute for, marriage, has gone from novelty to norm.

We say we shack up because we don't need a piece of paper to tell us we are in love. I've always suspected it was actually because we fear the loss of freedom. Or because we're scared to bet forever.

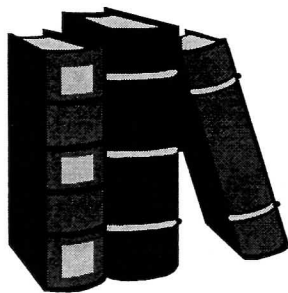
I'm not trying to beat up cohabitators. A long time ago, I was one. But it strikes me as intriguing, instructive and poignant that gay couples so determinedly seek what so many of us scorn, are so ready to take the risk many of us refuse, find such value in an institution we have essentially declared valueless. There's something oddly inspiring in their struggle to achieve the social sanction whose importance many of us long ago dismissed.

So tell me again why it is you don't want them to have that. I mean, yeah, some people say they are a threat to the sanctity of marriage. But I'm thinking they might just be its salvation.

"Inter-racial dating, which may lead to inter-racial marriage, is certainly improper, immoral, and unnecessary. Inter-racial marriages are also immoral in our society. Morality is according to one authority the "manners, customs, or patterns of behavior that conform to the standards of the group." The "group" does not perceive inter-racial marriages, miscegenation, as the norm...accepted behavior. Inter-racial dating is actually up to the individuals involved. However, when marriage enters the picture, utmost care must be taken."

(Source: "Back Talk," Virginia Tech, 13 October 1967)

OFF THE BOOK-RACK



"HOW SEX CHANGED - A History of Transsexuality in the United States"

Joanne Meyerowitz

384 pages, hardcover, ISBN 0-674-00925-8

Harvard University Press

If you have ever wondered where transsexuals come from all of a sudden - wonder no longer! Transsexuals have a long history! This book gives readers a look at the beginnings of medical and scientific documentation of transsexuality. Would you ever have imagined that the first complete genital transformation arranged through the Hirschfeld Institute in Berlin/Germany took place as early as 1922?! And in 1931 Felix Abraham, a physician who worked at the institute, wrote the first scientific report on human transsexual surgery.

The book points out that biological sex has a history and that humans have imagined it differently at different times and in different places. From the late 1920s on, Margaret Mead emphasized that the "potentialities" of women and men ranged widely and did not automatically fall into the culturally constructed categories of masculine and feminine. In the 1920s and early 1930s several papers printed articles on transsexuals. One story that made it into the newspapers featured Barbara Ann Richards who petitioned the Superior Court of California in July 1941 to change her name from Edward and assume the legal status of a woman. Her petition was granted. However, most Americans remained oblivious to the possibility of sex change.

The real big news came on February 13, 1953 with Christine Jorgensen, who made the front pages as "Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty" when she returned from Denmark. Her surgery was performed there in September 1951, and in spring 1952 the State Department approved her new passport with her new name and new gender. The book dedicates one chapter to Christine Jorgensen, the media frenzy around her, and the challenges she had to deal with since not everybody acknowledged her in her new gender. For example, an inspector in Washington DC threatened to keep Jorgensen from using women's restrooms.

The incredible publicity about Jorgensen helped to publicly mark transsexuality as a male-to-female phenomenon. This was a distinct reversal from the 1930s, when stories of female-to-male sex change predominated in the popular press. And in March 1954, the newspapers discovered Roberta Cowell, a Briton. What was striking about her was the fact that she did not have the same feminine past as Jorgensen. Cowell had been a dashing fighter pilot, race-car driver, and rugby player.

In the 1950s sex change also made its debut in B-grade movies such as Ed Wood's "Glen or Glenda?" featuring Bela Lugosi, and in cheap paperback novels. That was also the time when American doctors and scientists began to adopt the term "transsexual."

Read about how transsexuals began to organize, their surgery options/limitations here in the United States, the change from a more liberal atmosphere to a more conservative one, the struggles they face in daily life in a misinformed and uneducated world that does not always support them. Let me sum it up with a quote from a young female-to-male transsexual: "Nothing about me seems abnormal, except I have the wrong body."