



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

December-January 2004

Newsletter 226

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

December 16, 2003

No speaker scheduled, just our usual rap sessions.

January 20, 2004

Donn Crail, West Hollywood Presbyterian Church - For the past 18 years, the Lazarus Project has sought to create an environment for a supportive community where gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Christians may find spiritual and emotional guidance and sustenance as they face the challenges, often unique to our situation, to effect reconciliation with parents, family and friends. Please join us as Donn updates us on the latest work the Lazarus Project has undertaken and how the LGBT community is viewed within the United Presbyterian Church.

We are currently asking anyone who might be interested in working on the Los Angeles PFLAG Board for 2004 to contact myself or any of the board members for more information. - George Unger 323.848.7801 or at sjcgeo@rocketmail.com

Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

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)

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 (TSOON):

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

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! Happy Holidays, Chris Haiss

Deadline for submissions: January 1
(February/March issue)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with representatives of Amnesty International's New York office. They are currently doing research in LGBT communities across the country to see how the LGBT community in particular is treated by local and state law enforcement officials. If you have a personal story about an experience with law officials, either positive or negative, that you wish to share with Amnesty International, please contact Remy Kharbanda at Rkharbanda@aiusa.org.

Well again the holiday season is upon us and we ask you to make a donation to our chapter. We solicit donations twice a year and rather than contact you via phone or email, we ask that if you haven't already made a contribution this year, that you consider making one now. If you have already made a contribution we say THANK YOU and ask you to consider making a donation on behalf of someone you care about. We would be happy to acknowledge your gift with a personal thank you card to the individual or family member you designate. The amount of the gift will not be disclosed unless you specify.

As the holiday season approaches, all of us at PFLAG wish you and your families all the joys of the season. This time of year has always been special for children, so I ask, if your calendar allows, please make time to visit the Holiday Open House of GLASS - The Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services Foster Group Home on Sunday December 7th from Noon-3PM. They are located at 2254 W. 25th St in Los Angeles. There will be food and beverages served.

Happy Holidays!!

George Unger - Co-President PFLAG Los Angeles

PFLAG / LOS ANGELES NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!

We are enclosing an envelope for your TAX DEDUCTIBLE annual dues and/or a year end TAX DEDUCTIBLE donation.

Your continued support is greatly appreciated. Every little bit you give goes a long way.

Remember, we are an all volunteer organization.

Your donation helps defray our expenses.

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Joel Hendler & George Unger / Co-Presidents

Canada high court refuses marriage appeal

The Canadian Supreme Court wasted no time in dismissing an effort to reopen the Ontario marriage case that legalized same-sex marriage in the province last June. Two conservative groups asked the Court last Monday to allow them to intervene in the case and appeal the pro-gay ruling to the Supreme Court. On Thursday, the panel unanimously rejected the effort to gain standing, issuing a terse two-line Order of Motion under the signatures of all five justices. Meanwhile, the province of British Columbia has also legalized same-sex marriage. The two provinces where marriage is now legal are home to half the Canadian population.

Taiwan drafts law to wed same-sex couples

The government of Taiwan is preparing human rights legislation that will include legalizing same-sex marriages, Agence France Press (AFP) reported. If the proposal is approved by Parliament, the island of Taiwan would become the first Asian territory to recognize gay marriages. The draft, which one official said would be ready for parliamentary review by December, also addresses other human rights concerns, such as phasing out capital punishment. The AFP news report cited a statement from the office of President Chen Shui-bian, stating, "To protect their rights, people (of the same sex) should have the right to wed and have a family based on their free will."

European Parliament supports same-sex marriage

The European Parliament has urged the 15 nations of the European Union to extend full marriage and adoption rights to same-sex couples. The September 4 vote was 221 to 195 with 23 abstentions.

MEPs also said same-sex couples must be free to relocate together within the EU.

The recommendations were adopted via acceptance of a twice-yearly human-rights report.

Gay Weddings in New York?

New York Democrats unanimously passed a resolution to support legislation that would allow same-sex couples to marry in the Empire State. "This legislation helps right a longtime wrong, and simply provides same-sex couples with the same legal protections, rights, and responsibilities that heterosexual couples acquire when they marry," said Herman Farrell Jr., state party chairman and assemblymember from Manhattan.

(Excerpts) Marriage Protection Week October 12 through October 18, 2003**A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America**

Marriage is a sacred institution, and its protection is essential to the continued strength of our society. Marriage Protection Week provides an opportunity to focus our efforts on preserving the sanctity of marriage and on building strong and healthy marriages in America. Marriage is a union between a man and a woman, and my Administration is working to support the institution of marriage by helping couples build successful marriages and be good parents.

SPREADING THE WORD IN THE COMMUNITY

- Sam Gill, Terry McIntyre and Sylvia Weisenberg spoke at the Child & Family Guidance Center in Panorama City to the Center's teen group.
- George Unger met with representatives of Amnesty International to discuss their project affecting the LGBT communities in Southern California.
- From our PFLAG mom Karen Mason:
I spoke at Beverly Hills High School and Granada Hills High School, both schools which invite PFLAG panels back time after time. My co-speaker was the incomparable Mitch Grobson who absolutely obliterates for students any stereotype of a gay man. With his police background and his first hand experience in the community, Mitch makes an indelible impression on young people. He often begins his talks by asking, "Who in this classroom has heard the expression, 'Oh, that's so gay'?" If every hand in the room does not rise immediately, it is because a student is not paying attention. I had never heard the expression, until I began speaking with Mitch. "That's so gay" is used by students throughout Los Angeles to denote something which is not cool, not good or not admirable. As Mitch quickly points out to the students, it is never said in a positive way. The students quickly respond that it is not meant in any way to be offensive to gay people. Mitch will then ask them how a person who thinks he or she might be gay will feel hearing this seemingly innocuous remark repeated over and over on campus. At the end of his talks, he requests a show of hands again, asking who will voluntarily refrain from using the expression and who will ask others not to use the expression. He gets a fair number of hands going up. It is always a privilege to speak for PFLAG, especially with Mitch.

Anyone interested in
going on a
GLBT Family Cruise
to Florida and the
Bahamas in July of 2004
please contact
Greg at 866-732-8622.
Be sure to mention you
heard about it in our
newsletter.

"QUOTE - UNQUOTE"

Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio, Texas,
at the Senate Committee hearing on his so-called
Defense of Marriage Act (April 15, 2003):

"People talk about discrimination as though it were
a bad thing. It is something we do all the time."

"QUOTE - UNQUOTE"

Ed Gray, 55 year-old Boston Herald sports writer
who came out in his column, headlined "Out and
Proud":

"I'm out because I can no longer, in good
conscience, choose to ignore the unabashed
homophobia that is so cavalierly tolerated within
the world of sports. I'm out because the silence of
a closeted gay man only serves to give his implicit
approval to bigotry."

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

October 20, 2003 Sexual Identity Hard-Wired by Genetics - Study

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - Sexual identity is wired into the genes, which discounts the concept that homosexuality and transgender sexuality are a choice, California researchers reported on Monday. "Our findings may help answer an important question -- why do we feel male or female?" Dr. Eric Vilain, a genetics professor at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Medicine, said in a statement. "Sexual identity is rooted in every person's biology before birth and springs from a variation in our individual genome."

Since the 1970s, scientists have believed that estrogen and testosterone were wholly responsible for sexually organizing the brain. Recent evidence, however, indicates that hormones cannot explain everything about the sexual differences between male and female brains.

Published in the latest edition of the journal *Molecular Brain Research*, the UCLA discovery may also offer physicians an improved tool for gender assignment of babies born with ambiguous genitalia.

Mild cases of malformed genitalia occur in 1 percent of all births -- about 3 million cases. More severe cases -- where doctors can't inform parents whether they had a boy or girl -- occur in one in 3,000 births.

"If physicians could predict the gender of newborns with ambiguous genitalia at birth, we would make less mistakes in gender assignment," Vilain said.

Using two genetic testing methods, the researchers compared the production of genes in male and female brains in embryonic mice -- long before the animals developed sex organs.

They found 54 genes produced in different amounts in male and female mouse brains, prior to hormonal influence. Eighteen of the genes were produced at higher levels in the male brains; 36 were produced at higher levels in the female brains.

"We discovered that the male and female brains differed in many measurable ways, including anatomy and function," Vilain said.

For example, the two hemispheres of the brain appeared more symmetrical in females than in males. According to Vilain, the symmetry may improve communication between both sides of the brain, leading to enhanced verbal expressiveness in females.

"This anatomical difference may explain why women can sometimes articulate their feelings more easily than men," he said.

The scientists plan to conduct further studies to determine the specific role for each of the 54 genes they identified.

"Our findings may explain why we feel male or female, regardless of our actual anatomy," said Vilain. "These discoveries lend credence to the idea that being transgender --- feeling that one has been born into the body of the wrong sex -- is a state of mind."

***Angels in America* Don't miss it!**

On Sunday, December 7, 2003 the HBO Network will present the revolutionary, Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Angels in America*, starring Academy Award Winners Al Pacino, Meryl Streep and Emma Thompson.

The original production of *Angels in America* marked a defining moment in the way our culture views both AIDS and the lives of GLBT people, combining political commentary with humor, compassion and a bold moral vision.

Angels in America speaks movingly to the power of honesty and unconditional love in every family in this country.

California Domestic Partner Law Signed - September 19, 2003

SAN FRANCISCO - Gov. Gray Davis signed a domestic partner bill granting same-sex couples nearly all the rights and responsibilities of married spouses. "A family is a family not because of gender but because of values, like commitment, trust and love," Davis said before a cheering crowd at San Francisco's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender center.

This bill was designed to close a legal gap, to the extent possible under federal law, between homosexual and heterosexual couples. The law, scheduled to take effect in 2005, will allow domestic partners to seek child support and alimony and give them the right to health coverage under a partner's plan. Other provisions give domestic partners access to bereavement and family care leave, and exemptions from estate and gift taxes. After a partner's death, they will have the authority to consent to an autopsy, donate organs or make funeral arrangements. The law also prevents courts from forcing a domestic partner to testify against the other partner in a trial, while requiring greater legal responsibilities, such as covering a partner's debts.

A representative of state Sen. William Knight passed through the crowd at the signing ceremony, warning that Knight would file a lawsuit challenging the new law. Knight, a Republican, wrote a 2000 ballot initiative approved by 61 percent of voters that said "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid and recognized in the state of California."

"I believe a marriage is between a man and a woman. And I think we ought to codify that one way or the other. And we've got lawyers looking at the best way to do that." -President George W. Bush, July 30, 2003 Press Conference

Proposed Constitutional Amendment codifying marriage entirely on biblical principles:

Marriage in the United States shall consist of a union between one man and one or more women. (*Gen 29:17-28; II Sam 3:2-5).

Marriage shall not impede a man's right to take concubines in addition to his wife or wives.
(*II Sam 5:13; I Kings 11:3; II Chron 11:21).

A marriage shall be considered valid only if the wife is a virgin. If the wife is not a virgin, she shall be executed. (*Deut 22:13-21)

Marriage of a believer and a non-believer shall be forbidden. (*Gen 24:3; Num 25:1-9; Ezra 9:12; Neh 10:30).

Since marriage is for life, neither this Constitution nor the constitution of any State, nor any state or federal law, shall be construed to permit divorce. (*Deut 22:19; Mark 10:9).

If a married man dies without children, his brother shall marry the widow. If he refuses to marry his brother's widow or deliberately does not give her children, he shall pay a fine of one shoe and be otherwise punished in a manner to be determined by law.
(*Gen 38:6-10; Deut 25:5-10).

RAFU SHIMPO NEWSPAPER / Sept. 19, 2003 / By Nao Gunji, Rafu staff writer

Gays, Lesbians Seek Support from API Community

Asian Pacific Island (API) Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) advocates held a community conference, "Embraceable You," Sept. 13 at the Union Church of Los Angeles in Little Tokyo seeking to build institutional and cultural alliances between the straight and gay API communities. The conference included a panel discussion by an API gay youth, transgender, lesbian couple, and family members of LGBTs, and a keynote address by Assemblywoman Judy Chu.

The participants in the conference shared stories of frustration, isolation, and pressure they experience due to their sexuality. The event was believed to be significant because many APIs, especially among older generations, are hesitant to talk about one's sexuality. Harold Kameya, a member of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) and one of the panelists at the discussion, said, "I have a daughter who's gay, and she came out back in 1988, when the issue was solved by the Asian community by silence. Don't talk about it, then nobody would be upset." Kameya recalled that it was very difficult for him to face his daughter's sexuality, but community organizations, such as PFLAG, have given him a tremendous amount of support and education.

"We really wanted to strengthen the ties within the API Community on various issues, and one of them was an issue of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender rights," said Noel Alunit of Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team.

"I thought somehow other populations, like the white population has more gay people," Judy Chu said during her keynote address. "Now I realize that this was just my own stereotype, because what was happening in the reality was that nobody was talking about it. Chu has authored several bills to protect the rights of gays and lesbians. AB 458, which was signed by Gov. Gray David last week, is to give equity for gay, lesbian foster youth and to provide training to foster parents. She also introduced the bill promising that state contracts must be given only to businesses that provide domestic partners benefits, such as health care.

The Assemblywoman said that she has received "hysterical comments" and reactions because of those bills she has been involved with. Many believe Chu to be "promoting homosexuality, turning teens into homosexuals" and "pro-gay." "I will continue to support and work on LGBT issues because this is a right thing to do," she stated.

Dear Concerned Mother, Thank you for submitting the following article!

Reuben's Journey / By Adam Wills / Jewish Journal

The first transgendered rabbinical student adjusts to life in Israel

Claire Zellman made two life-altering decisions in 1999. Her first was to attend a Shabbat service that a friend recommended. After walking into a synagogue for the first time in more than a decade, she cried when she heard the "Baruchu." Her second was to transition to living life as a man.

Claire is now Reuben, and his flourishing involvement in the Jewish community since taking those first steps has led him to become Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR)'s first transgendered rabbinical student.

"Ultimately, what it came down to was that I want to be able to spend a large chunk of my time teaching Torah, and it seems to me that it calls for rabbinical training," Zellman said.

HUC-JIR's acceptance of Zellman is a first – not only for the campus but for any Jewish movement. His inclusion comes at a time when sexual orientation and gender identity are hot topics in Judaism's various streams.

The Conservative movement is considering a review of its policy on the ordination of gays and lesbians, while the Orthodox are wrestling with issues of acceptance within their own community following the release of "Trembling Before G-d," a film that examines the lives of observant Jews wrestling with homosexuality. The Reform movement, which first welcomed openly gay and lesbian students to its institution in 1990, recently added bisexual and transgendered to the list of people it now fully accepts.

However, transgender issues can involve but are not exclusively linked to sexual orientation. Instead, transsexuality challenges concepts of fixed, binary gender roles. Scholars in the Reform and Conservative movements have only recently begun addressing this issue and how it will impact Jewish communal practices. Under Orthodox *halacha*, sex changes are not allowed due to prohibitions on self-mutilation.

"In our society, gender is of supreme importance," Zellman said. "So a gender change has a huge effect on how you interact with the world in general."

Zellman refused to comment as to what steps he's taken toward becoming male, saying that he doesn't discuss the specifics of his transition, because "it's not important." In interviews, Zellman has described himself as "someone who falls under the broader scope of transgender."

Since being accepted by the Reform movement in March, Zellman has kept a level head about his first semester at the institution's Jerusalem campus.

"It's complicated to be a transgendered person anywhere. Moving to any new place is a little nerve-wracking," Zellman said.

He said that a few students and Israelis have mentioned that they've heard or read about him in the news, but that the topic hasn't come up very much since he moved to Jerusalem in August. After completing his first year in Israel, Zellman will return to the United States to spend four years at the school's New York campus.

Zellman, 24, grew up on the Westside and favored sports over shul once he completed his bat mitzvah at University Synagogue.

"At one point it was a choice between Hebrew High or the varsity softball team," the Harvard-Westlake alumnus said. "I went with the softball team." Zellman graduated with a bachelor's degree in linguistics from UC Berkeley in 2001 and recently completed postbac study in classical voice at San Francisco State University. He'd been a choral singer since the eighth grade (he's a tenor). "Music has always been an interest of mine, a love actually," he said.

So when Zellman became a regular fixture at Sha'ar Zahav, a San Francisco Reform synagogue for people of all sexual orientations, congregants encouraged him to get involved; he composed music for holidays, joined the high holiday ensemble and led songs during holidays. At 21, he was hired to perform as a cantorial soloist during the High Holidays at a San Jose synagogue.

While Zellman's initial involvement was musical, he decided to pursue becoming a pulpit rabbi rather than a cantor after reviewing his different educational opportunities.

"I studied the different curricula for each program and talked to as many cantors and rabbis as I could get a hold of and eventually concluded that I would be able to do a broader range of things that I wanted to do with rabbinical training," he said.

Zellman said that he is enjoying his classes and that the people on campus have been very nice. However, he hasn't had much opportunity to venture outside of the Eternal City.

"It's a fascinating city," he said of Jerusalem. "There is such depth and variety of cultures and experiences here – both Jewish and non-Jewish – that often I hardly know what to do next."

And for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Zellman spent time doing what he loves. He sang in the High Holiday choir and participated in all of the High Holiday services on the HUC-JIR campus.

While Zellman wished the situation in Israel was better during his time abroad, he's still getting a lot out of his time there.

"I think I can safely say that the conflict here is an ongoing low point for everybody," he said. "But I've had many wonderful experiences also – attending services at different synagogues, learning new music, meeting a lot of terrific people, appreciating a beautiful land."