



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

April-May 2004

Newsletter 228

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

April 20, 2004

Polly Bee - Former newspaper reporter, columnist, editor from Ojai, CA. Published poet & free-lance writer. The book -- "The Silent Voice of Bosie Bosell -- The Lesbian Who Played It Straight" -- her first work of fiction.

May 18, 2004

Rabbi Lisa Edwards - Temple Beth Chayim Chadashim, Los Angeles

Sunday June 20th 11AM

West Hollywood Pride Parade

PLEASE mark your calendars to join us!!!

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! Regards, Chris Haiss

Deadline for submissions: May 1
(June/July 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

Sooner than most of us could have imagined, gay marriage has become a headline event in the mainstream media. Just a few years ago the thought of gays and lesbians being allowed to marry in this country seemed years and years away. But instead it seems that politics has caused the issue to be debated publicly at this time.

Our country's President has made himself clear on where he stands on this issue, and yet he still thinks of himself as a uniter. By backing the passage of a constitutional amendment that bans gay marriage, the President has in fact, drawn a line in the sand.

I cannot stress enough, the importance of writing letters to your U.S. Senator and House representative telling them how wrong this type of amendment to our Constitution would be. Never before has an amendment sought to preserve rights for some Americans while excluding others. An easy way to locate the mailing addressing is by visiting the websites (www.senate.gov and www.house.gov).

In the past, when a lot of social issues seemed far from the borders of California, this one affects all of us and our loved ones. Again please take the time to write to your U.S. Congressional members and express your disapproval of such legislature. Handwritten letters go a long way, especially when it involves friends and family members. Here at PFLAG we are thankful to have such wonderful parents who have devoted a lot of time and effort to PFLAG's mission. Their sons, daughters and family members deserve the right to marry who they love.

George Unger - Co-President PFLAG Los Angeles

"Today, I call upon the Congress to promptly pass and to send to the states for ratification an amendment to our Constitution defining and protecting marriage as a union of a man and woman as husband and wife."

— President George W. Bush, February 24, 2004

If passed, this would be the first time in U.S. history that the Constitution is used to DENY rights to an entire class of citizens. In comparison, here's an excerpt from the South Africa Constitution. (FYI – South Africa is also one of the 16 countries that allows its citizens to sponsor their foreign same-sex partners for immigration purposes.)

Chapter 2 / Bill of Rights Equality

9. (1) Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.

(2) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.

(3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, **including** race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, **sexual orientation**, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

Gay expats can marry in Belgium

BRUSSELS -- Non-Belgian same-sex couples will now be able to marry in Belgium thanks to a recent amendment to the country's 'gay weddings' law.

From 6 February, the Belgian state will recognize marriages between non-Belgian gay couples provided at least one partner lives in or visits the country regularly. Before the planned changes to the law were announced last Friday only gay couples from European countries where gay marriages are legal could get hitched here. In reality this meant Dutch people and Belgians. But under the new legislation, non-Belgian gay couples can tie the knot here even if their home countries do not recognize same-sex marriages.

The ruling could prove useful to gay expat Americans for example, as President George W Bush recently hinted he may ban individual US states from recognizing gay marriages.

Cambodian king backs gay marriage

Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk has shown that advancing years are no barrier to an open mind and liberal attitude. After watching television images of gay marriages in San Francisco, the 81-year-old monarch has decided that same-sex weddings should be allowed in Cambodia too.

He expressed his views in a hand written message on his website which has proved extremely popular in Cambodia. The king said that as a "liberal democracy", Cambodia should allow "marriage between man and man... or between woman and woman."

He said he had respect for homosexual and lesbians and said they were as they were because God loved a "wide range of tastes."

Sihanouk, who is currently in Beijing for medical treatment, also said that transvestites should be "accepted and well-treated in our national community."

Such views are not widespread in Cambodia, but the king is hugely revered, although he is a constitutional monarch and has no executive powers.

Turkish Parliament Considering Prison Term for Sexual Orientation Discrimination

This January, for the first time, Turkey's Parliamentary Justice Commission took homosexuals into consideration when they decided to regard discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation to be prohibited by law. Proposed amendments to the Turkish Penal code will now consider that those who commit this crime may be subject to 6 months to 1-year jail term or a monetary fine. The Justice Commission gathered on January 29, 2004, to review the "discrimination" clause in the draft Penal Code. A unanimously agreed amendment specified that "discrimination based on sexual orientation" is a crime.

If the draft Penal Code is approved by Parliament, Turkey would become the first predominantly Muslim country to ban discrimination against gays, lesbians and bisexuals. The draft, which is expected to be presented for parliamentary review by mid-2004, also addresses other human rights concerns.

SPREADING THE WORD IN THE COMMUNITY

- Maurie Davidson, Jane Drucker and Terry McIntyre spoke at Birmingham High School in Van Nuys
- Terry McIntyre, Heather Mickelson, Bill Mochon, Marty Olson and Sylvia Weisenberg spoke at Granada Hills High School
- Maurie Davidson, Terry McIntyre, George Unger and Sylvia Weisenberg spoke at Milken Community High School
- Terry McIntyre and Sylvia Weisenberg spoke at The Accept and Respect Festival at North Hills Prep
- Andy Birnbaum, Herman Eastmond, Ron Elecciri and Beth Robbins spoke to a gay employee group at Warner Bros. Studios

Reaching out in the Community

By Nicky Bregman

On February 16th, David and Nicky Bregman and Steve Krantz spoke to a class of sophomore honor students at Cal State L.A., the Philosophy of Gender and Culture class. Their chosen project was, "How is the nuclear family affected when they find out that they have a gay child?"

We all told our individual stories and then opened it up for discussion. This was a multi-ethnic class with a wide age range of students. They asked us many very thoughtful questions ranging from: "Why was it so hard for your son to come out to you even though you were so supportive and accepting?", to "Do you think that women become lesbians because they have been sexually abused?"

This was a very stimulating class and the (CalState) University Times of that day had two long articles about the Gay Marriage Initiative and an entire Opinion Page on Homosexuality... these are changing times for the Cal State system and for the world at large...

CONGRATULATIONS ANDY & RON!



Our own Andy Birnbaum and Ron Elecciri got married at San Francisco City Hall February 16!

Congratulations to all the newlywed couples!

We want to start putting GLBT wedding announcements in our newsletter.

If you're tying the knot and would like to share this great moment with our readers, please e-mail me at haichi87@earthlink.net
Subject: PFLAG-Weddings

A child's worst nightmare – losing a parent due to our inhumane immigration laws / Part 1

When I heard 15-year old Marina Gatto speak at a Valentine's rally in Sacramento I was deeply moved. One of her moms is American, her other mom is German. Since our inhumane immigration policy does not recognize same-sex binational couples, this child might lose one of her moms. And so will many others. This is a family who fights for ONE simple right: being allowed to stay together. This right that every straight binational couple enjoys is not granted through civil unions. Furthermore, since immigration is a federal issue, the "Defense of Marriage Act" won't recognize Ramona's and Arzu's marriage for immigration purposes.

RAMONA & ARZU GATTO

(Married in San Francisco on February 13th)

We met about 6 years ago when Arzu first came to this country from Germany. Arzu began training in a kickboxing gym that Ramona who as a professional kickboxer, and 9 Time World Champion, worked out in. A friendship was immediate, and that turned into a close, wonderful family relationship.

Even as LGBT people, the inequality that same sex couples face with immigration issues were a shock to us. Arzu was here initially on a visitors visa and when that ran out, we became immediately aware that there would be problems keeping her in the country. We were given the advice by countless people, countless times that there were only two options, one was for her to "legally marry" a man, the second was an attempt to get a student visa which would only be temporary.

Since we believe VERY strongly in living with integrity, as well as wanting to teach our daughter to lead by example, and to fight for justice, we would never and could never choose the first option, which was for her to "legally marry" a man. As a family visible, vocal, and proud of who and what we were, there was never a moment that we would even entertain that idea.

Keeping Arzu here on a student visa however, still posed problems for us. Knowing that on a student visa Arzu would be saying that she intends to go back to her country whenever they choose to stop allowing her to attend school here. As well as saying that she was simply here only to learn, we risked and continue to risk her status when we are open, visible, and very much in the media proclaiming that we ARE a family, and that

she is going to school because THAT is the ONLY way to keep her in this country. Moreover, in choosing to get "legally married" recently on Feb. 13th in San Francisco it was a further assertion that we are a family, and a married couple, which we understands gives INS the right to revoke her student visa. We understand and accept the risks that we take in standing up with integrity and courage, and wanting to show the world that we will not hide that we are a family. We believe strongly that in showing people what we must face as a family and explaining the difficulties as well as the risks, that is the only way people will understand the importance of changing laws and the need for equality.

If it ends up being decided that our marriage is legal, it would have immense ramifications for our family especially. Because if we are given the same legal rights of heterosexual couples, then Arzu would have the opportunity to immigrate. Which would mean that she would no longer have to worry about any day being told she must leave the country, that she would no longer have the burden of being a full time student simply to stay in this country, and that we would not have the immense financial hardship that comes with her being forced to be a full time non-resident student. Mostly for our daughter however, it would have the most profound impact. It would mean that she would not have to fear losing one of her parents any day, and it would also give Marina the legal protections of having two legally recognized parents, that she is so in need of and so deserves. Every child deserves the right and the protections of having both their parents legally recognized.

Right now, the only option our family has to stay together is Arzu staying on a student visa, which is a temporary situation, and subject to being revoked or denied at any time.

Representative Seaborn Roddenberry of Georgia proposed an amendment that he said would uphold the sanctity of marriage.

Mr. Roddenberry's proposed amendment, in December 1912, stated, "Intermarriage between Negroes or persons of color and Caucasians . . . is forever prohibited."

He took this action, he said, because some states were permitting marriages that were "abhorrent and repugnant," and he aimed to "exterminate now this debasing, ultrademoralizing, un-American and inhuman leprosy."

LETTERS / From the Ventura County Star, Jan. 21, 2004

Misguided goal

Mr. Gallagher's essay about same-sex marriage and the government's role was descriptive and definitive. Recent rhetoric against same-sex marriages omits the differences between a civil marriage and a religious one.

President Bush wants to protect the sanctity of marriage, which by definition means to protect the holiness, saintliness or godliness of marriage. This is a worthy goal but a religious-oriented one. It is misguided when directed to a civil marriage. Bush does not realize sanctity is not and cannot be mandated in a civil marriage.

A civil marriage does not require anyone be able to or want to procreate. No vows are required. No reference to any God is required. No Bible is required. In fact, it is possible for two people to get their license, go to an approved authority, get it properly signed and witnessed, and be married without saying a word about anything, much less about to love, cherish and obey. What brings sanctity to a marriage is the people involved, their commitment to one another and their religious beliefs.

It cannot be mandated by the government and does not need government protection. No religious ceremony is threatened by same-sex marriages being legal. The issue is not whether gays can bring sanctity to a marriage but can they get equality under the law.

As a parent of a gay son, I hope same-sex marriages become legal. He deserves the opportunity to love and cherish someone of his choice, not be arbitrarily deprived of membership in one of society's most rewarding and cherished institutions, marriage.

I hope people can differentiate between a civil marriage and a religious one. One does not threaten the other.

John Cooley, Simi Valley

LETTERS / L. A. Times, February 27, 2004

Who is fit to marry? Richard Ramirez, mass murderer, can marry; a 100-year-old can marry an 18-year-old; liberated minors can marry; pedophiles can marry; alcoholics and junkies can marry; spousal abusers can marry; Protestants can marry Catholics; Jews can marry Muslims; rich can marry poor; smart can marry stupid; people can marry for money, position, greed or other less-than-loving motives ... as long as they marry someone from the opposite sex. Yet two female octogenarians, living together for over 50 years, are not allowed to marry. To further illustrate how arbitrary and ridiculous the marriage laws are, a gay man can marry a lesbian.

Paul Silverman, North Hollywood

Log Cabin responds to State of the Union address

"George W. Bush was elected in 2000 by bringing Americans together. State of the Union addresses should be used to unite all Americans around the nation's highest priorities. Americans are threatened by terrorism and job uncertainty - not gay and lesbian families," said Log Cabin executive director Patrick Guerriero. "Log Cabin will not stand by while anyone attempts to write discrimination into the Constitution. It is unnecessary and it cheapens our sacred Constitution," added Guerriero.

"In San Francisco, it is license for marriage of same sex. Maybe the next thing is another city that hands out licenses for assault weapons and someone else hands out licenses for selling drugs, I mean you can't do that."

--California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

Note from the editor: It's about EQUALITY - to my knowledge, there is no city issuing drug-selling licenses to STRAIGHT people...

Rabbi David Saperstein - Statement In Support Of Same-Sex Marriage

Last week, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston made a historic statement, urging the Massachusetts state government to enact legislation providing for same-sex marriage, in accordance with the recent ruling of the state Supreme Judicial Court in the Goodridge case. In doing so, the Community Relations Council wrestled with one of the most difficult issues facing American Jews - how to reconcile our fundamental commitment to equality with other portions of our written tradition that would seem to contradict this principle. The Reform Jewish Movement has clearly stated its support for committed monogamous partners to have the right to marry, regardless of their gender. By all accounts, though the debate was lively, the community's dedication to mutual respect for the differing perspectives present in pluralism shone through.

We strongly commend this statement.

NEW SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

We are excited to bring you news of a new scholarship program for LGBT youth and their friends from the Freedom Band Foundation of Los Angeles.

The Freedom Band Foundation is best known to PFLAG members for its marching unit, The Great American Yankee Freedom Band, a fixture in pride events since 1978. To commemorate the 25th anniversary of their founding, they have chosen to make an investment in the future by expanding their horizons to provide **scholarship assistance to young people** involved in what they have always stood for: promoting greater understanding of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender issues, with a passion for the performing arts. The scholarship is named in honor of James M. Berg, music educator and longtime Artistic Director of the band who passed away in January.

The Foundation will be raising funds for this scholarship by presenting a gala concert on April 25, 2004 featuring the Foundation's concert band, the **Hollywood Wind Ensemble**, with special guest performers **Julie Sheppard**, known throughout the country for her amazing performances as Judy Garland, and rising star violinist **Richard Adkins**. The theme of the concert is **Lights! Camera! MUSIC! - A Tribute to the Music of the Movies**.

We are inviting you to join the Freedom Band Foundation, **Project 10** and **PFLAG Los Angeles** in sponsoring this event. We need your help to cover our production costs and fund the scholarships we will be awarding. There are many ways you can help—from advertising in the concert program to becoming a major sponsor. As an all-volunteer organization, the Freedom Band Foundation can assure you that your tax-deductible contributions will be used wisely.

Donations to help with the concert and scholarship fund can be sent to:

The Freedom Band Foundation
James Berg Scholarship Concert
5419 Hollywood Blvd #C-709
Hollywood, CA 90027

Additional information about the concert, including ticket sale information can be found at www.freedomband.org, or you can contact Gary Lee Wolf, the Event Coordinator at (562) 209-5099 or by email at gary@glwolfproductions.net.