



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

December-January 2005

Newsletter 232

### 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 - 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. There is also easy access from the north driveway. Doors open at 6:30 pm; general meeting begins at 7:15 pm.

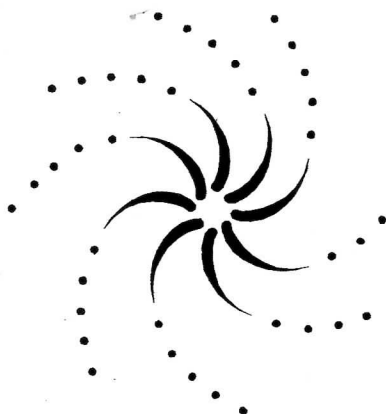
PFLAG starts each meeting with a rap group where individuals can share their concerns, questions and understanding about and with the gay person or persons in their families. After the rap session, we generally have a speaker or panel of speakers whose topic includes subjects pertinent to the families, gays and lesbians.

### Next meetings:

Tuesday, December 21, 2004

Tuesday, January 18, 2005

Please visit our website [www.pflagla.org](http://www.pflagla.org) for details on the speakers.



PFLAG LOS ANGELES  
WISHES ALL OF YOU  
HAPPY HOLIDAYS  
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

**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 &amp; 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@earthlink.net, call me at (818) 985-9319, or just drop me a note at our PFLAG meetings! Happy Holidays, Chris Haiss

Deadline for submissions: January 1  
(February/March 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 &amp; 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

Dear Members, I had a great time at the PFLAG National Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, Friday, October 22 through Sunday, October 24. It was inspiring and exciting - I am now charged up and eager to tackle key issues that confront us: equal marriage rights, safe schools, and communicating our message to Southern California.

The opening plenary session of the conference included a panel of experts discussing equal marriage rights. Kate Kendall, Executive Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights spoke eloquently about recent national events regarding marriage. She noted that San Francisco Mayor Newsom's decision to marry same-sex couples had a major positive impact on our goal to secure equal marriage rights. She then introduced Phyllis Martin and Del Lyon, the first couple to marry in San Francisco, to a standing ovation for their 51 year relationship and pioneering efforts. They spoke briefly to the audience.

The next speaker, Jackie Biskupski, an openly Lesbian Utah state legislator, presented the challenges of defeating Amendment #3 in Utah, which seeks to deny equal marriage rights to Utah's GLBT community. She presented statistics concerning hate crimes - over 12,000 hate crimes since 1991, per the FBI; of the 24 states moving to modify their constitutions to prevent same-sex marriage, 11 efforts have failed. An interesting statistic presented was that same sex couples are having children at the same rate as heterosexual couples. There are, sadly, 3 states that prohibit same-sex couples from adopting - Florida, Mississippi and Utah.

Evan Wolfson, Executive Director of Freedom to Marry and co-counsel in the landmark Hawaii equal rights case, presented a wonderful talk about how we should work together to achieve our goal of marriage rights for GLBT persons. He stated that we are in a "civil rights moment" in this country. He presented four important observations from history:

- **Wins trump losses** as we may lose state battles in 10 or 11 states in the next 10 days, but victories in Massachusetts and Canada trump those losses, as we can open hearts and minds by making things real.
- Where we lose, continue to fight and **lose forward**. The concept means that we understand that we may not be able to sway the majority in the time that we have. Even though we lose, we create leaders who supported the loss. We enlist allies in various venues - labor, business - who support us and will support us in the future. A key example was the California loss of the Knight initiative in 2000 which defined marriage as between a man and a woman. Despite this setback, we lost forward in that our efforts led to legislation in 2004 providing the most sweeping protections for GLBT couples - all but marriage. We need to reintroduce bills in the legislature to end marriage discrimination in California to buttress our victory Massachusetts. This may create a critical mass for marriage equality.
- **Tell the truths**. The country is divided in thirds on the issue of marriage equality: one third support same-sex marriage, one third are against gay people and one third - the middle third - are reachable but not yet reached. They are uncomfortable about gay people, about change. They are not haters and believe in equality for everyone. We need to move the middle third by espousing two truths: (1) real families are involved and (2) it's unfair to deny these real people equality under the law. We must engage in conversation. Our opponents know they are losing the conversation. That's why they want constitutional amendments to preempt the conversation.
- **Generational momentum** - young people support marriage equality. We must mobilize them. They are on our side. We need to give them example and opportunity and power.

The stakes are not just about gay people. Marriage rights touch us from birth to death. At stake is what kind of country we are going to be. Should all people be treated equally? No one religion dictates who gets legal rights. This respects the notion of separation of church and state. People, not the government, make choices about how we live. Government has no business putting obstacles in the path of how we are to live. On a personal note, I bought Evan's book "Why Marriage Matters", had him autograph it and gave it to my son when I returned home. My son was thrilled - "Wow, Dad, Evan Wolfson is a great man." (*continues page 4*)

The second plenary session featured Dr. Judith Stacy, New York University sociology professor, who discussed her research into same-sex parenting. She discussed her research which concluded that there are NO differences in the health and wellbeing of children of same-sex or heterosexual couples. She pointed out that many homophobic organizations selectively use her research to aid their cause by quoting out of context that "more research is needed." She pointed out that this was stated to explore the results more deeply. However, it didn't impact the previously stated conclusion. On the panel were two local Utah gay couples with children who poignantly pointed out the challenges they face as gay parents in Salt Lake City.

Saturday morning's plenary session was entitled "Scientifically Speaking: the State of Science on Biology of Sexuality and debunking reparative therapy."

Dr. Joan Roughgarden, author of *Evolution's Rainbow*, discussed her book which focuses on vertebrate sexuality, genes, and comparative anthropology expressions across history and cultures. A great many species don't divide into males and females among the vertebrates. One third of fish come from parents that change sex or are both sexes at the same time. Almost all plants make sperm and egg at the same time.

Another phenomenon is sex role reversal - seahorses are an example. Male seahorses carry eggs deposited by females. Sex role reversal also happens in birds and lizards. The universality of gender roles is thus rebutted. Multiple types of males and females exist in some species. In blue gill sunfish, the large male defends its territory, females deposit eggs, medium males fertilizes the eggs. The small male has female colors and is solicited by large male to attract the females. Both large and small males fertilize the eggs. Same-sex sexuality exists in over 300 species. We have observed that this is used to build relationships. Dr. Roughgarden mentioned the example of female to female sex in bonobos.

This evidence clearly demonstrates that homosexuality cannot be a disease - if it was, natural selection would have eliminated it.

She discussed how Native Americans allowed "female bodied" persons to be warriors and "male-bodied" persons to have female roles. The infamous Leviticus quote is now thought to refer to policing sexual position only. The notion of homosexuality first turned up in the late 1800s, not when the Bible was written. The Bible is mostly silent on homosexuality. What has happened is

that academic traditions have built edifices that are disadvantageous to GLBTs.

Dr. Lisa Diamond presented changing perspectives on sexuality. She recommended using sexual minority as a better term than Lesbian/gay or LGBTQ. Same-sex sexuality can appear at any age. The mean age of self-awareness is 9, but much variation exists. Knowing the age of first-awareness is meaningless. Change was thought to be abnormal once sexual orientation was discovered, but now we know that change is common - it is more reflective of changes in life. Sexual orientation was thought to matter more than gender, but now we know that gender matters more than sexual orientation, especially for women. Men recognize themselves as gay through imagination; women recognize themselves through relationships. There is evidence of non-exclusivity; i.e. there is a continuous range of sexual attractions. The typical Lesbian has some periodic attraction to men. Bisexuality is far more prevalent among men and women than has been thought, although it is more common in women.

Dr. Tim Murphy of the University of Illinois discussed the history and thinking underlying reparative therapy. He stated that we don't know why people have different sexual orientations - it is mostly speculation at this point. The original motives for reparative therapy was to prevent or cure homosexuality. Examples of cure attempts: testicular implants in Europe and bicycle riding. First-person accounts of sexual orientation isn't relevant - people simply don't know. Anti-gay groups try to debunk biological theories, such as the Catholic Church and the Traditional Values Coalition. On the other hand, there is concern by gays that if a biological basis is found, people would seek remedies. Right now, there is no master narrative on the biological basis of sexual orientation. However, additional science is not needed to help decide ethical treatment for gays.

Dr. Doug Haldeman, U of Washington, is a local Salt Lake City clinician providing help to victims of conversion (better term than reparative) therapy. Conversion therapy isn't about therapy at all, it's about the culture of anti-gay prejudice and misinforming the public about what it is to be gay. Conversion therapy includes putting gay men into "male" activities such as sports. A flawed Robert Spitzer public study last year indicated that some gay people can change. However, the study sample is a key problem - all people involved had a vested interest in the outcome. Self-reporting of results is the most serious flaw of such "research." We need to inform the public about the facts - without objectivity in analysis of the results, there is no validity whatsoever.

*(continues page 8)*



## national news

# Anthropologists debunk 'traditional marriage'

Group claims Bush's arguments don't reflect history

By ADRIAN BRUNE

Eager boy meets shy girl. Boy proves himself worthy. Boy and girl fall in love, get married and have children. They all live happily ever after.

It's folklore that appeals to many Americans — one that the media facilitate and many politicians moralize, according to many anthropologists. They say this timeless tale has one significant problem: In a great many civilizations, at least until the present era, marriages were arranged in the interests of kinship networks, not at the whim of lovers. And, throughout history, they have taken on a wide variety of forms, including same-sex partnerships.

President Bush similarly portrayed the union between male and female as the only proper form of marriage, calling it "one of the most fundamental, enduring institutions of our civilization" in his State of the Union Address. By doing so, these anthropologists say, he ignored a primary lesson of human culture and further perpetuated the Western marriage myth.

In a statement released last month, the 11,000-member American Anthropological Association gave Bush failing marks on his understanding of world societies and criticized his proposed ban on same-sex marriage.

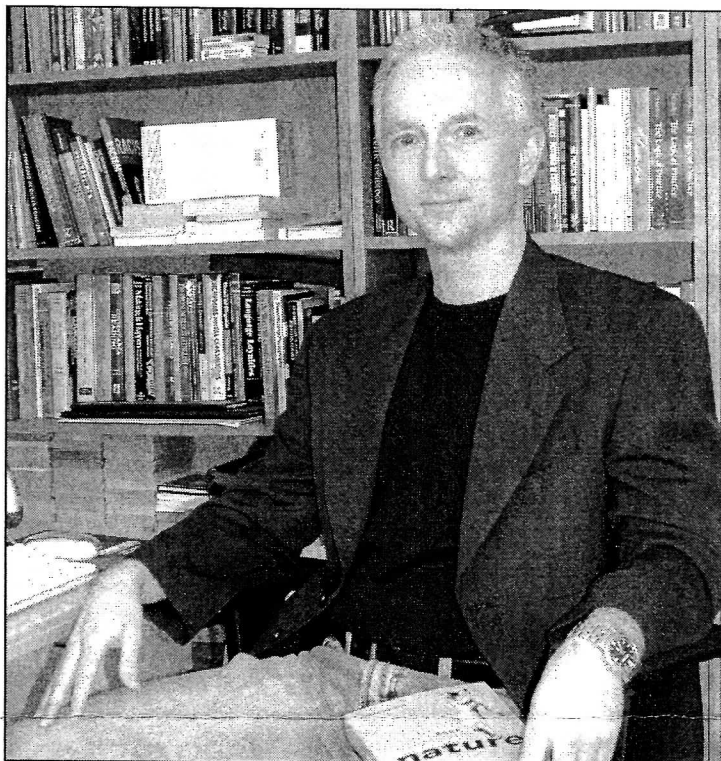
"The results of more than a century of anthropological research on households, kinship relationships and families, across cultures and through time, provide no support whatsoever for the view that either civilization or viable social orders depend upon marriage as an exclusively heterosexual institution," the association's executive board said.

"Rather, anthropological research supports the conclusion that a vast array of family types, including families built upon same-sex partnerships, can contribute to stable and humane societies."

## Modern marriage only 200 years old

Scholars of both texts and worldwide cultures agree that it is nearly impossible to formulate a precise and generally acceptable way to define the flexible nature of marriage, according to the AAA.

In his recent book, "The Trouble with Nature: Sex in Science and Popular Culture," George Mason University anthropologist Roger Lancaster argues that the notion of one-man, one-woman marriage crept into the collective



Roger Lancaster, an anthropology professor at George Mason University, said the modern idea of marriage is only 200 years ago and was developed at the time of the Industrial Revolution. (Photo by Leigh H. Mosley)

consciousness of American society only within the past 200 years — a result of both the industrial revolution, and the media's influence.

"Leaders often make global pronouncements about 'marriage,' as though it were a self-evident institution," Lancaster said. "Depending on its cultural context, marital unions can involve a host of different persons in a number of possible combinations. People are inventive and creative about the way they create kinship networks."

Marriage, as Americans envision it today, didn't exist during the time of the Old Testament, or even as the Apostles spread the word of Christianity across the Middle East and Europe. Rather, marriage has consistently adjusted to religious, political and economic changes, anthropologists said.

Throughout the pre-Christian world, most civilizations practiced polygamy, until the Romans systematized marriage by establishing an age of consent and specifying unions across socio-economic classes, according to Lancaster. The Roman Catholic Church soon spread the vision of monogamy, but it took hundreds of years to become the universal axiom, he added. Even then, families arranged marriages, usually as a business transaction with the bride accompanying a piece of land to farm, or a livestock inheritance.

A polemical historian, the late John Boswell, concluded that in pre-modern Europe "marriage usually began as a property arrangement, was in its middle mostly about raising children, and ended about love."

"Few couples in fact, married 'for love,' but many grew to love each other in time as

they jointly managed their household, reared their offspring and shared life experiences," he wrote.

Boswell was gay himself, as is Lancaster, who has contributed several opinion columns to this newspaper.

## Churches supported gay unions

Other academics didn't consider Boswell controversial for his inferences on early marriage, but for his assertions that liturgical ceremonies in the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches sanctioned gay unions. For a period of more than 1,000 years, between A.D. 500 and 1500, these churches in Europe performed the Adelphopoiesis, or "the making of brothers," he determined in his 1994 book, "Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe."

Even though these rituals celebrated a life-long union between two men, historians disagree on the nature of the relationship. Some state they did carry with them a homoerotic connotation, while others contend they were friendship, or "blood-brother" accords.

Joseph Palacios, a Georgetown professor of sociology, who is gay, said the more salient proof of same-sex unions in pre-modern Europe lies within the vows of religious orders. When priests joined a monastery or nuns entered a convent they organized their lives around each other in a common "marriage" to Jesus Christ.

"The vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are technically equivalent to marriage vows, and to me, these single-sex orders provide the larger evidence of the

sanctioning of same-sex unions," Palacios said. "They also procured children in the sense of establishing schools, orphanages and hospitals, which mirrored or paralleled the intent of marriage."

The American Anthropological Association created its statement denouncing Bush at the suggestion of Dan Segal, another anthropologist who points to the application of marriage to same-sex couples in both a classical and modern context.

Centuries after the Greeks and early Christians sanctified same-sex unions, Native Americans still practice a widespread same-sex tradition known as the berdache, in which two spirit males — men who are not tied to one gender — marry, provided they undergo a social and spiritual transformation, Lancaster said. One spouse might identify as female, but both remain biologically male.

Many modern societies don't even draw a distinction between homosexual and heterosexual in their pairings, Lancaster said, choosing a more free association regarding sexual or kinship ties. The Nuer of Sudan, as well as other African societies, institutionalized female same-sex marriages to preserve the lineage of one woman's family. These same-sex unions also exist in the form of cohabitation after an occasional "ghost marriage" of a woman to a dead man.

## Polygamy came first

Though some conservative politicians decry same-sex marriages as opening the door to polygamy, polygamy is actually the time-tested method of sexual bonding, anthropologists said. Outlawed in the United States in 1879, it still survives among some Mormons and is practiced consistently in the Muslim world.

Bush's model of marriage — the heterosexual nuclear family — actually evolved during the Industrial Revolution, as transient populations, mass education, the women's rights movement and the creation of leisure time tested marriage's tradition, according to Lancaster.

Women also moved up in status from property to partner, and children from a source of labor to the treasured outcomes of a loving bond. Early 20th century magazines, such as the Ladies' Home Journal, seized upon this idea and circulated it through mainstream America, scholars noted.

Though all don't necessarily support same-sex marriage, most anthropologists and social scientists agreed that the American Anthropological Association correctly challenged what many called, Bush's "ethnocentric view" of the union. A spokesperson for the association said the president's narrow remarks struck a nerve among those who study the culture through time and across the world.

"What happens in cultures is that people tend to see their culture as the paragon, and then extrapolate its values out to others," said Joanne Rappaport, a Georgetown professor of anthropology. "We see what we do as the only way to do things, and the president's narrow views on issues don't help in changing that perspective."

Adrian Brune can be reached at [abrune@washblade.com](mailto:abrune@washblade.com).

## MORE INFO

American Anthropological Association  
2200 Wilson Blvd, Suite 600  
Arlington, VA 22201  
703-528-1902  
[www.aaanet.org](http://www.aaanet.org)

**Resident status granted to gay couple**

<http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/120350.htm>

October 28, 2004

**Bogota** -- The Constitutional Court determined that gay couples have the right to permanent residence when one of the two is a foreigner.

In an unprecedented ruling, a gay couple from San Andres petitioned the governorship for a special residency permit that is required when a foreign partner wants to remain in the country – and it was denied with the argument that it could only be granted to civil marital unions constituted by a man and a woman.

The Constitutional Court determined that gay couples had the right to due process and the right to freely develop one's personality since "the [governorship's] administrative decision created an obstacle to the intent of maintaining a stable relationship as a gay couple."

*[Note from the editor:*

*Please keep in mind that this humanitarian ruling happened in Colombia. The United States still doesn't allow its citizens to sponsor their same-sex partner from another country for residency. The options for U.S. citizens: Separate from your foreign partner. Emigrate with your foreign partner to a country where binational same-sex couples are accepted and treated as human beings. Or stay here and live in constant fear of the partner's deportation once his/her visa expires. Take your pick.]*

**Manilow's Creepy Gays**

October 12, 2004

Singer Barry Manilow said October 12 he's sorry he offended some gay people and others in the audience during his October 7 concert at Madison Square Garden. As he was introducing a love-song duet he was about to sing with a male singer from his upcoming Broadway musical about a 1930s German boy band, Manilow said, "Of course, we're not going to sing it to each other – that would be creepy."

Manilow: "I'm terribly sorry if I offended anyone. I meant it only as a joke."

*[Note from the editor: I'm still trying to solve the mystery why nobody here in the United States seems to know Manilow's song "I Wanna Do It With You" ...]*

**Evangelist Swaggart Apologizes for Remark**

September 22, 2004

**BATON ROUGE, La.** - Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart apologized Wednesday for saying in a televised worship service that he would kill any gay man who looked at him romantically.

Swaggart said he has jokingly used the expression "killing someone and telling God he died" thousands of times, about all sorts of people. "It's a humorous statement that doesn't mean anything," Swaggart told The Associated Press.

Swaggart was a popular television evangelist during the 1980s until a 1987 sex scandal involving a prostitute that he met in a seedy New Orleans motel. Swaggart never confessed to anything more than an unspecified sin. A few years later, he was stopped by police while driving in California with a suspected prostitute in his car.

**"QUOTE - UNQUOTE"**

"It may seem a bit extreme to imply a comparison between the atrocities of Hitler and what is happening in terms of contemporary threats against the family – but maybe not."

Sheri Drew, Republican National Convention Speaker,  
comparing supporters of same-sex families  
to supporters of the Third Reich

**Germany expands same-sex couple rights**

Friday, October 29, 2004

Germany's parliament augmented the rights of same-sex couples with new legislation on Friday, but the provisions stop short of full marriage equality.

The country first granted limited legal recognition to same-sex couples in 2001, establishing a civil union registry that went into effect the following year.

Under the new legislation approved on Friday, gay couples will be able to adopt each other's biological children. They will also have state pension privileges for surviving spouses and an exemption from testifying against each other in court.

The law is expected to take effect Jan. 1.

In remarks to lawmakers, Justice Minister Brigitte Zypries noted that there are an estimated 5,000 registered same-sex households in Germany, with approximately 8,000 children living in them.

"Same-sex partnerships are a reality in Germany," Zypries said. "But gays and lesbians are still not treated equally in how they are able to live their lives, and there is no reason for that."

## SPREADING THE WORD IN THE COMMUNITY

- Nancy Zaun and Steve Krantz participated in the October GLBT fair at Pasadena City College.
- George Unger represented PFLAG at the October community roundtable for Immigration Equality in West Hollywood.
- George Unger was on hand to accept PFLAG contributions from participants of this year's Future X Scavenger Hunt in West Hollywood.
- Steve Krantz and Maurie Davidson represented the Los Angeles Chapter of PFLAG at the National Conference in Salt Lake City.

### Attack on UCLA's LGBT Campus Resource Center

September 14, 2004

Attacks by vandals on two successive nights at the UCLA Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Campus Resource Center are under investigation as hate crimes, a university police spokeswoman said Tuesday.

Center director Ronni L. Sanlo said the attack was the first in the center's 10-year history. "I'm grateful that no one was hurt and that most of the students are not yet back to witness these horrible attacks. UCLA authorities and administration have been wonderful with their support and immediate help. This serves as a reminder that while it's critical to change laws and policies, our work around basic homo/bi/transphobia is never finished."

### GSA Network and Students Sue Los Angeles Unified School District

On October 28, 2004, two students from Washington Prep High School and GSA Network sued the Los Angeles Unified School District and several Washington Preparatory High School staff for harassing students on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation. Students were subjected to ongoing harassment from peers as well as administrators, teachers and security guards.

### Judge Holds California Domestic Partnership Law is Valid

September 8, 2004

SAN FRANCISCO - Sacramento Superior Court Judge Loren E. McMaster held that the new expanded domestic partnership law - A.B. 205 - is valid. "The ruling today is a victory for the tens of thousands of California families headed by lesbian or gay couples in committed relationships who will finally have access to most, but not all, of the rights and protections available to married couples under state law," stated Geoffrey Kors, Executive Director of Equality California.

### *Our Family, Our Children*

A Day for TransParents and Their Children

In her quest to connect with other TransParents, Lain Beller-Kennedy had the wonderful idea of putting together a family event. *Our Family, Our Children* will be a scheduled day, either a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, where activities will include arts and crafts, games, bonding, stories, food and beverages, and relaxation for TransParents and their children.

(As of the print date of this newsletter, no date has been set.)

For more information, please contact Lain at 714-801-3453 or by e-mail at [lainsajedi@yahoo.com](mailto:lainsajedi@yahoo.com) or page her at 562-621-1827

When the expanded domestic partnership law goes into effect on January 1, 2005, it will significantly increase the state law rights and duties that come with domestic partnerships. The new law is much closer to equality for same-sex couples.

"We are extremely relieved by the Court's decision today," said Johnny Symons and William Rogers, one of the 12 couples who intervened in the lawsuit to defend the new domestic partnership law. "As parents, we are doing everything in our power to protect our two young children. But without the protections in AB 205, our family will not have the same security as other families."

When it goes into effect on January 1, 2005, A.B. 205 will provide registered domestic partners in California with many additional basic protections and responsibilities including: community property, mutual responsibility for debt, parenting rights and obligations such as custody and support, and the ability to claim a partner's body after death. The law does not allow for joint tax filing and certain other protections under state law, and does not provide access to over 1,000 federal protections that married couples enjoy.



The last plenary on Sunday morning included a panel of religious leaders. An ex-bishop of Church of Latter Day Saints, Bob Rees, first spoke about his challenges in moving his church toward fairness for gays. Next up, Reverend Susan Russell, a gay, female Episcopal priest, and a firebrand, spoke eloquently about the need to reclaim the Earth one inch at a time until we get back to the Garden of Eden. The "toothpaste isn't going back into the tube." She noted that Episcopalians accepted gays in 1976, but it took until 2004 to "come out" and appoint Gene Robinson bishop of New Hampshire.

Orthodox Rabbi Steven Greenberg, the- author of "Wrestling with God and Men", said a prayer on God's creativity to begin his talk. He noted that Reform Jews open doors widely to GLBT people. Conservatives are, unfortunately, schizophrenic. Most Orthodox Jews view GLBTs as radical sinners. The Orthodox movement is going slowly - starting to see GLBT people as real people, and not as "them." Testimonies are making a difference. What is positive is that the Orthodox community has a tradition of dialog and debate. God wants us to debate the Torah and come to conclusions about it. We need to find ways to speak to people that doesn't frighten them. The Orthodox communities are beginning to listen. Rabbi Greenberg mentioned that Sodom was only about inhospitality - and similar to a Florida gated community! The infamous Leviticus verse proscribing sex between men is about rape, not gay love. He believes that God wants humans to decide who to love.

Revered Robert Strommen, a minister in the United Church of Christ, stated that each local church is autonomous. The UCC has established a covenant between churches - they take each other seriously, are responsible to listen and dialog about common faith, but not forced into a specific practice. In 1972, the first gay candidate for priesthood appeared, Bill Johnson. He was

ordained and became the first openly gay minister in Protestant Christian churches. In 1985 General Synod became open and affirming to GLBT members. Today, 511 churches are open and affirming out of a total of 6000.

Reverend Meg Riley of the Unitarian Universalist Church provided some history. In 1967, 80.2% wanted to discourage homosexuality by education. In 1969 the first gay minister came out. In 1979, the first openly gay minister was appointed. They have encouraged same sex unions starting in the 1980's. The UU Church has funded an office for gay affairs to end homophobia for the past 30 years. Over 2/3 of the approximately 1000 UU congregations are now learning about homophobia. That all are made in God's image is an essential part of Unitarian history. The UU Church fought against slavery in the early 1800's and is fighting now for marriage equality. Reverend Riley closed by stating that "no heterosexual couple ever said that our marriage is in trouble because of the gay couple down the pew."

I hope my notes give you a sense of the wonderful experience it is to be at a national conference with over 450 PFLAG parents, friends, family, and heroes in the fight for GLBT rights. I was happy to have met Maurie Davidson of our chapter, to renew my acquaintance with California State coordinator Pam Woody, to shake the hands of great men like Frank Kameny and Evan Wolfson, who deserve our admiration and respect for their courage and accomplishments.

In his closing remarks, PFLAG National President Sam Thoron stated that over \$69,000 was pledged during the conference to help PFLAG fight homophobia and secure equal rights for GLBT people. Next year will be a year of new, national programs to fight for equal rights for all citizens. I hope you will join me in activism for the future safety and happiness of our children.

Steve Krantz - Co-President PFLAG Los Angeles

Well it's that time of year. We ask if you haven't renewed your PFLAG membership in the last 12 months to do so now.

PFLAG membership dues have changed for the first time in a long time. Annual membership now is \$50 with \$15 going to our national office.

Thank you for your continued support.

With the political change going on PFLAG is needed more than ever.

George Unger - Co-President PFLAG LA