

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

I am writing this column on April 4. On this day 39 years ago, Adele Starr, her husband Larry and a very few supporters held the first meeting of a group that would come to be PFLAG Los Angeles. Nobody came. The stigma was too great. Parents were too afraid. But Adele didn't give up. On March 8 of the following year, she tried again successfully, and PFLAG Los Angeles has been meeting every month since then.

We go on because new people continually join the chapter and work to achieve the ultimate goal of all PFLAG chapters: "to promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends." This March we welcomed three new board members to the chapter leadership: Polly Kim, Daryl Parker, and Lucy Benji Terrell. Their talents and expertise will enable us to utilize social media more effectively, to better meet the needs of the transgender community, and to serve the families of middle school/early teen LGBT youth as they deal with school and their communities.

This message is an invitation to everyone who reads it to connect or reconnect with our chapter activities. It's not hard to make a difference. Come to a meeting—we'd love to see you. Your voice, your story may be just the words of encouragement a young person or a parent needs to hear.

Consider joining the Speakers Bureau. Recent engagements include Cleveland Humanities Magnet Charter High School, Agoura High School (a school assembly on transgender issues sponsored by the GSA), Animo Watts College Preparatory Academy, and a USC School of Social Work graduate class. If you are a Spanish speaker, a transgender person or the parent of a transgender person, we have a particular need for you. Contact Liz at [SpeakersBureau@pflagLA.org](mailto:SpeakersBureau@pflagLA.org).

Tell us about a dynamic speaker. At almost every PFLAG Los Angeles meeting, we have an educational program—a speaker on LGBT issues, a short film, a panel. We are always looking for people who serve the community and move equality forward—through their professions, with a book or article, a film or documentary, in education, the social sciences, the business community, or the arts. You, our members and supporters, reach a broad range of the greater Los Angeles community, so your recommendations are greatly appreciated. Just email your suggestions to Stuart Huggins at [VicePresident@pflagLA.org](mailto:VicePresident@pflagLA.org).



March with us in the Los Angeles Gay Pride Parade on Sunday, June 8. You'll find all the details on our website starting in late May. Last year, a wonderful grandmother carrying a sign proclaiming her love for her LGBT grandchildren was proudly wheeled down the whole parade route in a wheelchair. Her love, and the love of all the fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, LGBT persons and straight allies, touched every person in the crowd.

The officers and board members of PFLAG Los Angeles believe it is a privilege and an honor to do this work, following in the footsteps of the brave and determined people who preceded us. We can't do it without you. —Mariette

## Our Stories From Mariette Sawchuk

We call this column "Our Stories," but sometimes the stories that resonate most deeply are those of other people who come to PFLAG and talk with incredible honesty and bravery about the challenges they are facing. As a regular facilitator, I've had the privilege of listening to many of these stories. Here is one that has stayed with me.

She was a young and soft spoken woman. She listened intently to others in the group. And then she spoke. She was a wife and mother. A month earlier her husband had told her he was gay. Her pain was palpable. They loved each other deeply. He was her best friend. But living in the closet had been agony for him, and they agreed he should move out of the house. He had his own apartment and had begun to date.

She was devastated. She missed him unbearably. She worried about what to tell the children, when to tell them, how to tell them. They didn't understand why Dad didn't live with them any more. She was concerned that they would be harassed at school if the situation ever became common knowledge. Because of their age, she was afraid those difficult years would be even harder for them.

The terrible wrenching apart that none of them could avoid seemed to be symbolized by her family's tradition of Sunday dinner. All her siblings and their spouses and children gathered each week at her parents' home, where her mother cooked a big dinner. It was crowded, noisy, chaotic, warm and nourishing in every way. Her husband still tentatively came. But what would happen when he met someone special? He wouldn't come any more—a weekly reminder of the loss.

Weeping, she finally confided her fears to her mother. This remarkable woman paused, hugged her daughter and said, "We'll just have to get a bigger table."

May you and I always have a table big enough for everyone.



P.O. Box 24565  
Los Angeles, CA 90024

info@pflagLA.org

**1.888.PFLAG 88**  
**(1.888.735.2488)**  
**www.pflagLA.org**

PFLAG Los Angeles is an all volunteer, non-profit 501(c)3 charitable organization run by parents, family members, LGBT persons and their friends. Each of us came for help, found support, and joined the organization to assist others on their journey to acceptance. Our chapter, together with a group in New York City, founded the national PFLAG organization, which provides assistance to over 350 independent chapters nationwide.

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## Legislative Corner

From the editor: While all eyes were on Arizona's anti-gay "Religious Freedom Restoration Act" (SB 1062) that passed their Republican-controlled Senate on February 19 and their House on February 20, and while everybody wondered what Governor Brewer would do with this bill on her desk, many Californians were unaware that on February 21, California State Republican Assemblymember Shannon Grove introduced her own version of such a bill, AB 2237: "This bill would state the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that would provide an exception to the Unruh Civil Rights Act to protect the free exercise of religion."

Thanks to the efforts of Equality California [www.eqca.org] this legislation is not moving forward as of right now. According to Equality California, Grove's office stated that she will no longer pursue this bill. That might be true. But if not her, then someone else may already be waiting in the wings to step in. Dear readers, voting does matter.

And here is Equality California's 2014 package of bills which will help improve equality for LGBT Californians. These bills will:

**Modernize Birth Certificates:** AB 1951, authored by Assemblymember Jimmy Gomez, would modernize California birth certificates by allowing parents to choose to self-designate as "father," "mother" or "parent," eliminating inaccurate designations and confusion for LGBT parents.

**Protect Students:** SB 840, authored by Senator Ricardo Lara, holds schools accountable for documenting responses to bullying and referring students to appropriate services when bullying has taken place. Status as of March 20: Passed the Senate Education Committee by a bipartisan vote of 7-0-2.

**End Youth Group Discrimination:** SB 323, the Youth Equality Act, authored by Senator Lara, is a two-year bill introduced in 2013. It clarifies that nonprofit youth organizations will only be rewarded with special tax exemptions if they comply with California's existing nondiscrimination laws.

**Clean Up Marriage Language:** SB 1306, authored by Senator Mark Leno, replaces references to "husband" and "wife" in state law with gender-neutral language such as "spouse," to recognize all married couples throughout California code.

**Ensure Health Care Providers Know LGBT Health:** AB 496, authored by Assemblymember Rich Gordon, is a two-year bill introduced in 2013. It would increase awareness of LGBT health issues among health care providers, leading to better care and better outcomes.

**End the "Panic" Defense:** AB 2501, authored by Assemblymember Susan Bonilla, would eliminate the so-called "gay panic" and "trans panic" defenses, outrageous tactics used by defendants who claim their violent acts were triggered by the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Ensure Accurate Death Certificates:** AB 1577, the Respect After Death Act, authored by Assemblymember Toni Atkins, would make sure death certificates for transgender Californians accurately reflect their authentic, lived identity. Status as of March 25: Passed the Assembly Health Committee by a bipartisan provisional vote of 17-1.

**And What's Going on Outside of California?** You may have heard that Louisiana legislators voted down the repeal of their sodomy law. Never mind that sodomy laws were ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court over ten years ago. If it interests you how this law is written, search the web for Louisiana+crime against nature.

Then there is Oklahoma. Their marriage case is now being heard by the U.S. Appeals Court. Four years before California passed its despicable Prop 8, Oklahoma voters overwhelmingly approved a gay marriage ban (Question 711) in 2004 that also banned recognition of same gender marriages performed in other states. One young Republican state representative even proposed to get rid of marriage entirely so that the State would not violate the U.S. Constitution by denying same-sex couples the right of marriage. Voting matters!

### PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK!

**Renew your membership, make a special gift, or join us for the first time TODAY.**

As an all-volunteer organization, our work is made possible only with the generous contributions of our members and donors. Your contributions support our monthly meetings, website, helplines, Speakers Bureau, and outreach to ethnic and faith communities. PFLAG Los Angeles is a 501(c)3 charitable organization and 100% of your donation supports our programs.

Please Note: When you pay dues to PFLAG Los Angeles, a portion of your dues (\$15) goes to PFLAG National and makes you a member of both PFLAG Los Angeles and PFLAG National. However, if you pay dues or make donations directly to PFLAG National, 100% of your dues/donation stays with PFLAG National making you only a PFLAG National member.

Use the envelope provided or donate on-line at [www.pflagLA.org/Join-Donate](http://www.pflagLA.org/Join-Donate).

We all have a PFLAG story to share. Some are a testimony of growth and understanding, others are painful and heart-breaking. These stories of real peoples' lives can be major teaching moments to some and life-savers to others.

# We Need YOUR Stories!

We encourage you to share YOUR story with us. There will be at least one person out there who will benefit from what you have to share.

The focus should be on your personal story as it relates to the coming-out of an LGBT family member/loved one. Maximum number of characters with spaces is 4,300. If you prefer, we can interview you over the phone and write the story for you!

All stories are welcome and submissions are subject to editing. By submitting your story you give PFLAG permission to publish it in our newsletter, on our website or other media to promote PFLAG. If requested, your name will not be published.

Please e-mail your story or request to be interviewed to [NewsletterEditor@pflagLA.org](mailto:NewsletterEditor@pflagLA.org).

# SUPPORT

MEETINGS CONTACTS ORGANIZATIONS

## PFLAG LOS ANGELES MEETINGS

### WESTWOOD\*

Westwood United Methodist Church  
10497 Wilshire Bl. LA 90024

3rd Wednesday of each month  
7:30 - 10:00 pm / Free Parking

\*Visit our website for upcoming speakers  
[www.pflagLA.org](http://www.pflagLA.org)

### SILVER LAKE

Metropolitan Community Church  
4607 Prospect Avenue, LA 90027

2nd Thursday of each month  
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Street Parking

## CONTACTS

PFLAG Los Angeles Speakers Bureau  
Contact Liz Mullen at  
[SpeakersBureau@pflagla.org](mailto:SpeakersBureau@pflagla.org)

## HELPLINES

PFLAG Los Angeles & Pasadena  
1.888.PFLAG 88 (1.888.735.2488)  
English and Spanish

Transgender Support  
818.985.9319 (Chris)

The TREVOR PROJECT  
24-hour suicide prevention line  
866.488.7386  
[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

## ORGANIZATIONS

PFLAG National  
202.467.8180  
[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

## Spreading the Word in the community through our Speakers Bureau engagements/ education, activism & advocacy

Stuart Huggins, Rudy Perez, Flo Trapani, and Sylvia Weisenberger were invited to speak to an MFT Graduate Class on Counseling with Diverse Populations at Cal State Northridge.

Lisa Kimsey, Liz Mullen, Chris Angel Murphy, Cara O'Donnell, and Dagan VanDemark spoke at Cal State Northridge to Graduate Social Work classes.

Betsy Hanger, Shervin Khorramian, Liz Mullen, and Lucy Terrell were invited by USC to talk to a Graduate Social Work Class on Human Sexuality.

## May 22 is Harvey Milk Day!

Do you remember Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man to ever be elected to a public office in the United States? It was 1977 and Harvey won a seat as a San Francisco City Supervisor. He was sworn in on January 8, 1978, and so was fellow supervisor Dan White, the man who would kill him and Mayor George Moscone on November 27 that same year. Do you remember that White was only sentenced to a seven-year prison term out of which he served five? Because he was convicted of manslaughter rather than murder. You may have heard Harvey's famous quote "If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door." It was part of a tape Harvey made about a year before his death, with instructions that the tape would only be made public if he died by assassination. To honor Harvey's life, the U.S. Postal Service will issue the Harvey Milk Forever stamp. The stamp goes on sale on May 22, Harvey's birthday. Happy birthday, Harvey. You're not forgotten.



## Quote - Unquote

"I've often been asked why issues of equality are so important to me. And, frankly, I never understand why I'm being asked that question. Because to me this is fundamentally about the premise and the promise of our country, of always marching toward a more perfect union."

—Chelsea Clinton, Time to THRIVE Conference, Las Vegas

REMEMBER

When you no longer need PFLAG that's when PFLAG NEEDS YOU!

[www.pflagLA.org](http://www.pflagLA.org)





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Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) promotes the health and well-being of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender 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.

## SPRING 2014

# TransAction

## AB 1266 – School Success and Opportunity Act

In our last newsletter we alerted readers about the group “Privacy for all Students” and their efforts to repeal AB 1266 through a ballot measure in the November election. Their efforts failed. They were not able to gather enough signatures to put it on the ballot. Raising awareness of AB 1266 and what was at stake if it were repealed stopped another radical group from moving forward with their backward agenda. Thank you, Californians, for not falling for it.

## National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) Applauds Federal Protections for Transgender Survivors of Violence

This week the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) released long-awaited guidance on the 2013 law prohibiting discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity by entities funded under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA’s nondiscrimination

protections provide broad protections, not only for LGBT survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, but for anyone else facing discrimination from law enforcement agencies, courts, or community groups that accept VAWA funding for any part of their operations. The guidelines clarify that refusing to accept a person’s self-identified gender when delivering services constitutes unlawful discrimination, and that in many cases segregating by gender in the first place is prohibited. Find more on this issue on NCTE’s website at [www.transequality.org](http://www.transequality.org).

## Department of Justice Kicks Off Transgender Law Enforcement Training

On March 27, the Department of Justice launched a new program to train law enforcement personnel. “What we are about to see is a cultural training program designed to educate law enforcement about the transgender communities they serve. It also is designed to foster mutual understanding between law enforcement and the communities they serve, and enhance law enforcement outreach capabilities to the transgender communities by addressing sensitivities, stereo-

types, and expectations,” said Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole at the launch event. “The Department recognizes that what is often lost in the debates about transgender individuals is that transgender lives are human lives...Today, we celebrate the newest tool in the Department’s toolbox to forge a stronger collaboration between those who have taken an oath to serve and protect all in their communities including the particularly vulnerable members of the transgender community.” The training will be provided by the Community Relations Service (CRS), a component of the U.S. Department of Justice. CRS was created by the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

## Authentic Lives

Authentic Lives is a new publication of the Transgender Law Center (TLC). It is an online publication to introduce change makers, explore trans rights, and celebrate progress toward justice for transgender and gender nonconforming people. In this special online version, you’ll find added interactive content like videos and links to news articles. Check it out at [www.transgenderlawcenter.org/archives/9700](http://www.transgenderlawcenter.org/archives/9700).