

## President's Message PFLAG Los Angeles' Fortieth Anniversary Meeting



When you opened the door to the education building at the Westwood United Methodist Church, you could hear the excited voices coming from upstairs Fellowship Hall, our long-time meeting site. When you walked into the room, you were swept up into a vortex of hugs. It was a reunion—but more than that. Over and over people held onto each other telling stories: “You facilitated the first support group I was ever in.” “When I heard you laugh I knew having a gay son would be all right.” “I felt so afraid but you made me feel safe.” The people at our Fortieth

Anniversary Meeting were reliving life changing moments with other PFLAGers who had come before them.

It was a human chain of love in which each of us was a link connected to others before and after us—all with the goal of improving the quality of life for LGBTQ persons and moving equality forward. We were connected to the founders Adele and Larry Starr by Lyle Henry, a gay man who had participated in the 1981 meeting that launched the National PFLAG organization. We honored past presidents Peggy Olson, Larry Sperber, and Steve Krantz and remembered those including Adele Starr, George Unger and Joel Hendler, who have passed away. We celebrated the varied gifts that enrich PFLAG Los Angeles—the passionate advocacy of Lynette and Larry Sperber and Maurie Davidson; the persuasive speaking abilities of Sylvia Weisenberg, and Speakers Bureau coordinators Andy Birnbaum and Ron Elecciri, and of Liz Mullen who has taken over the leadership of this important work. We thanked newsletter editor Chris Haiss and Nancy Zaun, who for untold years

handled the mailings (we had to hire a company to replace her). We honored meeting leaders like Lucy Benji (Gender Focus), Gizella Czene (Spanish language) and Stuart Huggins (South Los Angeles), and past and present board members.

Space doesn't allow me to thank by name everyone who attended and those who were unable to come. Few if any of us know all the people who have contributed to PFLAG Los Angeles over the years. But all of us at the meeting thanked them in our hearts. PFLAGers have come over the years and contributed to our chapter in hundreds of large and small ways without wanting or expecting thanks. They did it for love. That love is our legacy. In their name, we are committed to continuing our work of support, education and advocacy.



Top Row: Beverly Toyama, Harold & Ellen Kamaya. Pictured Above: Mariette Sawchuk & Lyle Henry, Robert Peterson & Stuart Huggins, Betty DeGeneres & Steve Krantz, Larry & Lynette Sperber, Maurie Davidson & Sylvia Weisenberg.

## Our Stories **Irv, Loving Dad**

My son came out more than twenty years ago. At that time he was already a young adult in his twenties. He sat me and my wife down for the big news. He was very well prepared and we, the parents, were very surprised and not prepared at all for what was coming, like probably most parents in this situation. He did his homework very well and had answers to questions that parents typically would ask. I don't remember if I was more upset or my wife when we heard this unexpected news. I was probably more

surprised than she was. Of course, right off the bat, one of the first thoughts that came to my mind was that this meant he wouldn't have any children and we wouldn't have any grandchildren. And that thought was a little bit painful. But we've learned since then that that's not the case any longer. The world has changed, and thanks to PFLAG so have we.

At the beginning, being confronted with news you didn't expect can be very challenging and can even hurt. But eventually, whoever it was that was quite upset finally came around because

one of the important things, if not the most important thing, was the fact that our son shared information about PFLAG. He told us that he had attended several of the local PFLAG meetings and said, “You know, I'm not forcing you to come. But I think you'll get something out of it if you come to the PFLAG meeting.” Yes, was he prepared for our conversation!

My wife and I were willing to give it a try to find out what PFLAG has to offer us. It was absolutely scary going to our first PFLAG meeting because we had no idea what (continued on page 3)



P.O. Box 24565  
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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, LGBTQ 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.

#### **PFLAG LOS ANGELES BOARD** Adele Starr Founder

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## Legislative Corner From the editor:

On January 28, California Assemblymember Phil Ting introduced AB 1732, the Equal Restroom Access Act, that would establish the nation's most progressive restroom access law. The legislation is sponsored by Equality California and would require single-occupancy restrooms in California businesses, government buildings, and public spaces to be identified as "all gender."

"This bill will greatly enhance the safety of and increase options for transgender people, who are often harassed or threatened in public, multi-stall restrooms, but the benefits would truly extend to virtually everyone," said Rick Zbur, Executive Director of Equality California. "Everyone at one point or another will benefit from this bill – including nursing mothers, parents with an opposite-sex child, the elderly and people with medical conditions with an opposite-sex caregiver. And this bill will not impose any real costs on businesses or governments – it merely requires that single use restrooms be made available to everyone. The cost quite literally is no more than a new plastic sign."

This is very different from what happened just now in North Carolina where House Bill 2 was passed by the General Assembly and signed into law that same night by Republican Governor Pat McCrory. It was passed in what seems to be a hysterical overreaction in response to a Charlotte city ordinance barring discrimination and creating transgender accommodation for restroom use. It nullifies existing laws that protect LGBT populations and prohibits local governments from enacting their own anti-discrimination rules. This much in regard to overreaching government.

We are blessed that we live in a state that values ALL people and, yes, this includes LGBT people. Like it or not. Now imagine for a moment how our state would look if our elected state legislators were to pass legislation that would nullify all existing LGBT protections throughout California and would not even allow a city like West Hollywood to pass anti-discrimination laws. Can't happen? It just happened in North Carolina.

We can be glad to have organizations like the Transgender Law Center that vigorously fights for the rights and

protections and safety of transgender and gender nonconforming people. Or the National Center for Lesbian Rights who announced that it just won its second U.S. Supreme Court case in less than nine months when our highest Court unanimously, let me repeat, unanimously reversed Alabama's refusal to recognize a Georgia adoption by a lesbian mother, their client, after the couple's relationship ended.

And we can be very proud to have PFLAG and be part of an organization that celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. Already back then people knew that discrimination is never a good thing and courageous parents started standing up for their gay and lesbian children when there were no laws to protect them. Since then we've come a long way. But we can't allow misguided and misinformed people to turn back the clock on us and our loved ones. This is why we need laws. This is why we need legislators who don't ignore their LGBT constituents. This is why we, we the people, and this includes LGBTQ people, do understand why voting matters.

*[Info provided by [www.eqca.org](http://www.eqca.org)]*

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

Chris Angel Murphy and Kimmy Tran spoke to a women's health class at Los Angeles Southwest College on the subject of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Marta Castillo, Gizella Czene, Julian Foley, Sarah Vitorino, and Sylvia Weisenberg spoke to a class of MFT graduate students at CSUN on counseling diverse populations.

Liz Mullen, Cara O'Donnell, Rudy Perez, and Ulandsey Peterson were invited by Cal State Dominguez Hills to talk to a class on human sexuality.

Maurie Davidson, Mike/Michelle Dennis, Bill Fields, Betsy Hanger, Kimmy Tran, and Sarah Vitorino were invited to speak to students of Doni Whitsett's graduate class on human sexuality at USC School of Social Work.

Christie Carney, Mike/Michelle Dennis, Stuart Huggins, Liz Mullen, and Cara O'Donnell spoke to the LGBTQ group of LA Southwest College.

*(continued on page 3)*

### **PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK!** Renew your annual donation or make a special gift today!

As an all-volunteer organization, our work is made possible only with the generous contributions of our 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 make a donation of \$35 or more to PFLAG Los Angeles, a portion of your donation (\$15) goes to PFLAG National and makes you a member of both PFLAG Los Angeles and PFLAG National. However, make donations directly to PFLAG National, 100% of your donation stays with PFLAG National.

**Use the envelope provided or donate online at**  
**[www.pflagLA.org/join-donate](http://www.pflagLA.org/join-donate).**

**Shop at AmazonSmile**  
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Smile, you're supporting PFLAG Los Angeles  
Your everyday purchases or gifts  
can help PFLAG Los Angeles expand its  
mission of support, education, and advocacy.

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/95-3707419>

## We Need YOUR Stories!

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.

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

Mike/Michelle Dennis, Barry Mason, and Sarah Vitorino held two panel presentations at Santa Monica High School.

Liz Mullen represented PFLAG when speaking at The Country School.

## Our Stories *(continued from cover)*

we were going to run into. But then we saw this other family, we looked at each other and our eyes were wide open. How could it be?! It was somebody that lived in the neighborhood. Another couple whose daughter came out to them. We were as surprised to see them as they were surprised to see us there. We knew right away that our first PFLAG meeting wouldn't be our last and continued to attend regularly. Coming to the meetings made a huge difference for me and my wife. And it was great because when we both attended and talked about it afterwards, just the two of us without our son being present, we more or less understood what was going on and how he was coping with it and what he had to encounter and all that stuff. So, we continued to come to the meetings. And each and every time we learned more and more. For us, it was also great to connect with other parents who were going through the same. We appreciated the welcoming and the mutual support and understanding that the PFLAG meetings provided to parents and families like ours.

Of course, at the meetings we also found out that there were people there who shared that either a brother or a sister or one or both of the parents had disowned them. For both of us it was very hard to hear these stories. That was something that never crossed our minds. Our son was the same person we love and trust. OK, it's something we had to get used to and understand. But cutting him off was never an option, because he is still our son and always will be. And isn't that what family is all about?

We also heard at the meetings that coming out even to close friends doesn't always go well and long-term friendships have been cut off. Thanks to the support that PFLAG provided, outside of PFLAG my wife had the courage and made an explanation to a very, very close friend of ours. And that close friend understood without any further explanation which meant an awful lot to my wife.

We encourage you to share YOUR story with us. 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.

I think it is very important for family members, regardless of who they are, to attend some of the PFLAG meetings. Then you really begin to learn some things. Of course, these are things that you never knew before. It is also the realization that you are not the only family in this world with a gay child and that others have their challenges too, but that's OK. So let me say it again: Go to the PFLAG meetings. Because there are so many things you learn. Each time there's something new, something else. Something that will make you understand more and strengthen the ties between you and your gay child. I know from my own experience as a loving dad.

## 2016 Pride Parade

March with us in  
the Los Angeles Pride Parade on  
**Sunday, June 12!**

You'll find all the details on our website  
starting in late May.

## Quote - Unquote

"Until this hateful law is repealed  
and LGBT North Carolinians  
are treated with the equal  
dignity they deserve,  
I will not film another  
production in North Carolina,  
and I encourage my colleagues  
in the entertainment industry  
to vow to do the same."

— Rob Reiner, Director/Producer  
*[in reference to House Bill 2]*

## RESOURCES

MEETINGS - CONTACTS - ORGANIZATIONS

### SUPPORT MEETINGS SPONSORED BY PFLAG LOS ANGELES 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)

### Gender Focus

Metropolitan Community Church  
4607 Prospect Avenue, LA 90027  
2nd Thursday of each month  
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Street Parking

### East LA *(Sólo Español)*

Bienestar East LA  
5326 East Beverly Blvd, Los Angeles 90022  
3rd Thursday of each month  
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Street Parking

### San Fernando Valley *(Sólo Español)*

Bienestar Centro del Valle de San Fernando  
8134 Van Nuys Blvd., #200, Panorama City 91402  
4th Friday of each month  
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Free Parking

### South LA

La Tijera United Methodist Church  
7400 Osage Avenue, LA 90045  
2nd Thursday of each month  
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Free Parking

### CONTACTS

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

### HELPLINES

PFLAG Los Angeles  
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)

### REMEMBER

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

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





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**OUR VISION:** PFLAG envisions a world where diversity is celebrated and all people are respected, valued, and affirmed inclusive of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

**OUR MISSION:** By meeting people where they are and collaborating with others, PFLAG realizes its vision through:

**SUPPORT** for families, allies and people who are LGBTQ; **EDUCATION** for ourselves and others about the unique issues and challenges facing people who are LGBTQ; **ADVOCACY** in our communities to change attitudes and create policies and laws that achieve full equality for people who are LGBTQ.

SPRING 2016

## TransAction

### Failed Anti-Transgender Ballot Push

Supporters of a proposed anti-transgender ballot initiative have failed to submit the 365,880 signatures necessary to qualify it for the November, 2016 ballot. "Privacy for All", the group behind the failed measure, is backed by the right-wing, Sacramento-based Pacific Justice Institute and other supporters of Proposition 8.

The measure would have prohibited individuals from using facilities in government buildings except in accordance with their sex as determined at birth, through medical examination, or court judgment recognizing a change of gender. It also would have created a legal damages claim of at least \$4,000 against a person or government entity that violates the provision. (*More on measure 1681 at [www.sos.ca.gov](http://www.sos.ca.gov)*)

"All Californians - no matter their race, age, gender, or sexual orientation - should have the same freedom to support their families and go about their lives without fear of discrimination," said Kris

Hayashi, executive director of Transgender Law Center. "This initiative was a poorly veiled attack on transgender people that sought to undermine that freedom and single out for harassment anyone who doesn't meet stereotypes of what it looks like to be male or female. Today Californians have made clear these types of discriminatory attacks on transgender people and our families, communities, and neighborhoods have no place in our state."

Supporters of similar efforts elsewhere have fought ugly, divisive and deceitful campaigns that preyed on voters' ignorance of what it means to be transgender.

"Opponents of LGBT equality use ignorance and fear as a weapon against the transgender community," said Rick Zbur, executive director of Equality California. "We know from our research that many people don't really even know what 'transgender' means. While our opponents failed to gather enough support this time, we know they will be back. Through our public education campaign, we will educate the public about transgender people, the challenges they face and the contributions they make." [*From: [transgenderlawcenter.org](http://transgenderlawcenter.org)*]

### Welcoming the all-gender restroom "revolution"

San Francisco joined Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Austin, Seattle, Santa Fe, and New York City in requiring all businesses and city buildings to designate single-stall restrooms as all-gender. While transgender and gender nonconforming people have the legal right to use restrooms that correspond to their gender, this kind of legislation is still a relief for disabled people with caretakers, parents taking their children to the restroom, transgender and gender non-conforming people who might face harassment while trying to use the restroom, and women who often face longer lines for public restrooms while the single-stall men's bathroom stands empty.

The new legislation introduced by San Francisco Supervisor David Campos and crafted with the support of Transgender Law Center will be the most comprehensive of its kind in the country, with robust enforcement mechanisms and a requirement for new buildings to include an all-gender option. [*From: [transgenderlawcenter.org](http://transgenderlawcenter.org)*]