

STARR NEWSLETTER

PARENTS, FAMILIES & FRIENDS ALLIED WITH THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

www.pflagLA.org



President's Message

PFLAG LOS ANGELES AND THE CORONA VIRUS

As most of you know, PFLAG Los Angeles has cancelled all person-to-person meetings until further notice. We took this step before the "Safer at Home" rules were put in place out of consideration for the health and safety of our members and participants.

With all the stresses of this difficult time, support is more important than ever, and we are working to start online support meetings. We are currently at the experimental stage, making sure Zoom connections work and facilitators can negotiate the program controls to provide smooth interactions for all participants. Keep an eye on your inbox for an invitation to our first online PFLAG Los Angeles support meeting.

Our telephone helpline, 1-888-PFLAG88, is still being staffed. People who need support can also contact us through info@pflagla.org.

As events are being cancelled and schools are being closed, our Speakers Bureau is no longer out in the community. We are keeping in touch with organizations that have used this service, and will happily resume when the crisis is over.

PFLAG's [Facebook page](#) will continue to have new posts. From time to time, we may send emails with information about PFLAG and suggestions about staying connected during this period.

NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS

It's election year, not only for the country but also for PFLAG Los Angeles. The board of directors has selected a nominating committee composed of Liz Mullen, Speakers Bureau Trainer; Karen Mason, Treasurer; York Knowlton, graphic designer and webmaster; and Maurie Davidson, representative to PFLAG National.

I will not be a candidate for president. During the fourteen years that I have been president, we have built a board of committed people with remarkable and varied talents. The new president or co-presidents will be knowledgeable about PFLAG Los Angeles, committed to its vision, and skilled leader(s). I will remain on the board, serving in communications and as president emeritus. It has been a great honor and a joy to lead a group so deeply dedicated to LGBTQ persons and their families, to education for the general community, and to advocacy for equality.

Stay tuned for information about the election, which will be open to all current members of PFLAG Los Angeles. If you are not a member, you can join using the "Donate" page on our website pflagla.org.

THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

You made our annual appeal a big success. Whether you contributed by check, PayPal, or [Facebook](#), your generosity has given us the means to reach thousands of people through our website, brochures, Speakers Bureau, and community events like the annual Pride Parade and the Models of Pride conference. Be assured that every dollar will go toward direct assistance for LGBTQ persons, their families, and allies.

We also thank Macy's for a generous \$5,000 grant. Their donation has enabled us to transition *(continued on next page)*



SUPPORT EDUCATION ADVOCACY

President's Message

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to new software and a new look, replacing the old program which is no longer supported by its developer. Previous grants from Macy's Fund for Bloomingdale's underwrote the translation of our brochures and our website into Spanish. We are deeply grateful for their ongoing support.



VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE!



After months of hard work by our amazing webmaster York Knowlton, our beautiful new website is up and running! The transition period gave us the opportunity to reorganize some of the material and revise content. Check it out at pflagla.org! - END

From the Editor

— Chris Haiss

Just 20 years ago, California passed Prop 22, ensuring that marriage is between one man and one woman...

And while Governor Gavin Newsom signed several pieces of legislation into law in 2019 that deal with LGBTQ (such as AB493 and AB711), you may have read headlines like this one by Nathaniel Weixel [thehill.com] "Federal judge overturns ObamaCare transgender protections" by "ruling that a 2016 policy violates the religious freedom of Christian providers."

Or this one by Jacob Knutson [www.axios.com] "The states seeking bans on transgender minors' medical treatments" where he informs readers that "At least eight states are currently deliberating bills that, if passed, would outlaw transgender minors' access to gender-affirming medical treatments." and that "South Dakota's State House on Jan. 29 passed a bill that would punish medical professionals with a \$2,000 fine and a year in prison if they treat transgender minors with puberty blockers, hormone therapies or gender-related surgeries. Florida's Republican-held Senate introduced a bill that would make it a Class 2 felony, which carries a maximum punishment of 15 years in prison, to administer gender-related treatments to minors." and that "Missouri's legislature is considering

four separate bills... One bill would classify parents who approve of treatments for minors as child abusers."

With all of this going on, it is important for you to know that PFLAG's National Board of Directors adopted the following on November 15, 2019:

Anti-Transgender Violence and Discrimination

PFLAG was the first national LGBTQ+ organization to mandate the full inclusion of people who are transgender as part of its expressed mission statement, approved by the Board of Directors in 1998.

PFLAG recognizes that in the 20+ years since approving this inclusive mission, discrimination, violence, and harm against transgender and gender-expansive people has greatly increased, with violence against transgender people—in particular Black transgender women—growing to epidemic proportions. PFLAG also recognizes that transgender people of color experience a compounded negative impact from their intersectional identities, including poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and health disparities.

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PFLAG commits to advocating with—and supporting—transgender and gender-expansive people; and to working to reduce and remove the root causes of this crisis of violence and injustice, including systemic racism, sexism, discrimination, and harassment. We are also committed to educating others and ourselves about gender identity and gender expression in order to meet unfounded fear with facts.

"PFLAG will deploy its resources
to listen to, engage, and bolster
diverse transgender communities and
the organizations that serve them ..."

PFLAG will work to build communities that value transgender and gender-expansive people, and to reduce societal barriers that lead to harm, poverty and, too often, death. PFLAG will deploy its resources to listen to, engage, and bolster diverse transgender communities and the organizations that serve them, lifting up actions to increase opportunities for fair and just employment, housing, healthcare, and access to public services including law enforcement. PFLAG will also continue to educate law enforcement agencies and officers to reduce harm, and end the high rates of mistreatment, incarceration, denial of necessary medications, and physical and sexual assault in jails and prisons that transgender and gender-expansive people—especially Black transgender women—experience. [pflag.org/policystatements]

We have much more work to do. Emphasis is on WE. Please join us to make this new year as inclusive as possible and as safe as possible for ALL families. We CAN make changes. But the magic word is WE. - END

Our Stories

— Susan Cottrell, Loving Mom

[Susan is the former vice president of PFLAG Austin, and founder of FreedHearts, a ministry for families of LGBTQ individuals (www.freedhearts.org). The following is an excerpt from Susan's TEDx talk "Why I chose my LGBTQ daughter over the Evangelical Church."]

I come from a large, wounded family. By the time I was 24, both of my parents and three of my brothers had died. And even though I still had two sisters, I felt abandoned and alone. I remember watching The Sound of Music with all those kids lined up in a row; it was like the family I never had. I couldn't wait to be a mother. Life would be perfect, or so I thought. I met Rob when I was 26, he wrote me a love song, and we were married three months later. It was a really good love song!

A year after that, we had our first child and then four more. When Chris was just two weeks old, we ventured out to the local market. An older woman there took one look at him, so tiny, bundled up in his bright blue baby blanket. She said, "God bless him," and I burst into tears. One day, you're a regular, rational person; the next, you're a mom. You have this amazing responsibility to protect your children, to prepare them for the world.

"Then one day, the phone rang,
and everything changed."

We figured out pretty quickly that one thing you want when you're raising kids is community. For us, that was the church. We were at church a lot. We led Bible studies in small groups, Rob was a worship leader and I sang on the praise team. And we homeschooled all five kids who basically had the run of the place. Life was good! Our amazing children grew into amazing adults, and we had our trusted community.

Then one day, the phone rang, and everything changed. It was Annie calling from college, she was 20. I was wiping down the white-tiled counter in my bathroom when Annie says, "Mom, I got something to tell you. I'm attracted to girls. I think I'm bisexual. I prayed about it, mom, I've resisted it, but it won't go away."

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Our Stories

— Susan Cottrell, Loving Mom

Now, I know what you're thinking. You're hoping I whipped out a rainbow flag and said, "Annie, that's totally fine, we accept you just the way you are." But that's not quite what happened. See, I had nothing against LGBTQ people, really, but after 20 years in the Evangelical Church, I believed that being gay was somehow wrong.

"Not accept my daughter?

What does that even mean?

I was devastated. I realized I was

being asked to choose between

the two most important parts of

my life: my child and my church."

I love my daughter, and I thought I had to protect her. So I said, "Annie, don't give in, we'll support you. How can I help?" As I hung up the phone, my heart sank. I knew we'd never be the same in the church again.

Later, at Bible study, I shared with some of my closest friends, hoping they'd give me some wisdom. Instead, they just went straight to the rules. They said, "Being gay is a sin and you can't accept it." Not accept my daughter? What does that even mean? I was devastated. I realized I was being asked to choose between the two most important parts of my life: my child and my church.

I chose my child. What else was I going to do? I chose Annie. And we left the church, we lost our community.

And eight years later, half of our family still doesn't speak to us.

My faith was fraying at the edges. I needed to understand this. And what does the Bible even really say about it anyway?

I needed to understand, and I began to read everything I could. I even went to a seminary. And I learned that most Christians do accept LGBTQ people. And I also realized that I had become extremely judgmental. That was a really hard realization. But I began a deep process of deconstructing that judgement.

Meanwhile, Annie called from New York. She said, "Mom, I'm dating women now, and I am more at peace with God than I've ever been." That was all I needed to know. Rob and I came to complete peace about Annie.

Three years passed, things were good, Annie came home for a visit. We were in the kitchen making salads for lunch, and she said, "Mom, are you sure you won't change your mind and reject me, you and dad?" I [\(continued on next page\)](#)

PFLAG Volunteers Spread the Word

with education, activism

& advocacy through

our Speakers Bureau

engagements

Cal State Northridge:
Steve Krantz and Chris Tompkins

The Kaleidoscope:
(Project of The Help Group):
Mike/Michelle Dennis, Margie Mullen,
Rudy Perez, and Chris Tompkins

Pasadena Community College:
Terrie Duba, Bill Fields,
and Glenn Mitchell

Polytechnic High School:
Barry Mason and Sylvia Weisenberg

Polytechnic High School:
(second engagement)
Steve Krantz, Liz Mullen,
Margie Mullen, Cathy Sumner,
and Sylvia Weisenberg

Our Stories

— continued from previous page

was like, "Sweetie, I am sure we will not reject you. But why are you asking?" Then she told me about her friend Alison. When Alison came out, her mother threw her down the stairs and threw dishes at her.

That was a real wake-up call. It wasn't just about our little family, it was about countless other families.

Around that same time, I went to a Christian women's gathering where the speaker was saying, "You've got to do what God calls you to do, no matter how uncomfortable, no matter how unexpected. If God calls you, you've got to do it." So I went to her at the break, and I said, "As you were speaking, God was telling me to serve the gay community." It's not what she expected. She said, "You mean to help them not be gay, right?" So much for hearing God saying the unexpected.

LGBTQ people are being bullied, beaten, shamed, abandoned, and rejected. And parents are being asked to choose between a demanding God and their own child. And none of this has anything to do with what we learn from Jesus about the power of love.

Research shows that 57 percent of transgender youth without parental support attempt suicide. But with parental support, that number goes down to 4 percent. 57 percent to 4 percent - that's the power of a parent's love. I knew I had to do something, I had to reach the parents.

So I started a blog. And the more I wrote, the more people came out of the woodwork. One mom, Caren, was terrified that her son would go to hell and she would too for supporting him. Her pastor *(continued on next page)*

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percent. 57 percent to 4 percent
- that's the power
of a parent's love."

**PLEASE
SUPPORT
OUR
WORK!**

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. When you make a donation of \$35 or more to PFLAG Los Angeles, \$15 of your donation goes to PFLAG National and makes you a member of PFLAG National as well.

Donate online at: www.pflagLA.org/donate

had told her that. I invited her to my home for the weekend, and I said, "Caren, no one is going to hell here. Your job is to love your son, that's it." Her family was restored, and her son has blossomed into his true self.

"Real love accepts people
as they are, with room
for who they may become."

It was so gratifying to help other Christian parents come to peace, reconcile their faith issues, and keep their families together. It became our full-time work. We made a lot of progress, and my little blog grew into an online support community with more than 3,000 moms and dads and more than 50 local regional groups where parents meet face to face. But, for every parent we helped, we heard from just as many LGBTQ people in crisis. One young man came out to his parents and they put all his belongings on the lawn and set them on fire. Another received a delivery of black roses from his family to say he was dead to them. And one young woman stepped out of her college library to find her parents on the corner waving Bibles and shouting, "God hates fags!" Can you imagine? And these parents think this is love, they call it tough love. They've been told that they're loving their children by shaming and shunning them, and seeking to make them straight. But I know what love feels like, and that is not love. Real love accepts people

as they are, with room for who they may become. The hard truth is that some LGBTQ children will never get their parents back. What are they to do? These kids need parents. And that's why I do this work. I'm a mom and I love these kids, and I encourage other moms and dads to love them too.

Rob and I have begun to officiate LGBTQ weddings too. For most of these people's lives, the message that they've received from those who represented the voice of God condemned relationships like theirs. As pastors, Rob and I represent the voice of God, and it's a voice of love.

It's human to be frightened by things we don't understand. It's not just religious fundamentalists who respond in ways that are damaging and hurtful. How we treat people of color, refugees, people with disabilities, the elderly, people on the other side of the aisle, or people in our own family, anyone who is not how we think they should be, who's not like us. We try to make them like us. When that doesn't work, we reject them. Yet, every major religion has some version of the golden rule: to treat others the way you want to be treated.

So here's my invitation to you. Look around for someone in your life who's not been treated well, who's been treated badly, and treat them the way you'd want to be treated. It could be your child, a family member, a friend, a neighbor, or a stranger, someone who could use some encouragement. You can choose to love them. "There is no fear in love, but real love dispels fear." And real love - real love - accepts people as they are with room for who they may become. - END

We would love your support!

Your everyday purchases or gifts can help PFLAG Los Angeles expand its mission of support, education, and advocacy.

Go to smile.amazon.com and Amazon donates to PFLAG Los Angeles



[http://smile.amazon.com/ch/95-3707419](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/95-3707419)

TransAction

To Survive on This Shore

The photographs and interviews presented by photographer Jess T. Dugan and social worker Vanessa Fabbre give us a deep inside look into the lives of older transgender people across the country, a largely underrepresented group of older adults.

The featured individuals share a wide variety of life narratives, offering an important historical record of transgender experience and activism in the United States. The resulting portraits and narratives provide a nuanced view into the struggles and joys of growing older as a transgender person and offer a poignant reflection on what it means to live authentically despite seemingly insurmountable odds. [www.tosurviveonthishshore.com]

Merriam-Webster's Word of the Year: They

Our Word of the Year for 2019 is they. It reflects a surprising fact: even a basic term—a personal pronoun—can rise to the top of our data. Although our lookups are often driven by events in the news, the dictionary is also a primary resource for information about language itself, and the shifting use of they has been the subject of increasing study and commentary in recent years. Lookups for they increased by 313% in 2019 over the previous year.

English famously lacks a gender-neutral singular pronoun to correspond neatly with singular pronouns like everyone or someone, and as a consequence they has been used for this purpose for over 600 years.

More recently, though, they has also been used to refer to one person whose gender identity is nonbinary, a sense that is increasingly common in published, edited text, as well as social media and in daily personal interactions between English speakers. There's no doubt that its use is established in the English language, which is why it was added to the Merriam-Webster.com dictionary this past September.

Nonbinary they was also prominent in the news in 2019. Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (WA) revealed in April during a House Judiciary Committee hearing on the Equality

Act that her child is gender-nonconforming and uses they. Singer Sam Smith announced in September that they now prefer they and them as their third person personal pronouns. And the American Psychological Association's blog officially recommended that singular they be preferred in professional writing over "he or she" when the reference is to a person whose gender is unknown or to a person who prefers they. It is increasingly common to see they and them as a person's pronouns in Twitter bios, email signatures, and conference nametags.

Dwyane Wade 'Nothing changes with my love'

By Scott Stump, TODAY, December 20, 2019 (excerpt)

Dwyane Wade has opened up about educating himself as a parent and supporting his 12-year-old child Zion's LGBTQ journey. The retired former Miami Heat superstar spoke about Zion with former NBA players Matt Barnes and Stephen Jackson on their "All the Smoke" podcast.

"I watched my son, from day one, become into who she now eventually has come into," Wade said. "And for me, it's all about: Nothing changes with my love. Nothing changes in my responsibilities. So, all I had to do now is get smarter, educate myself more. And that's my job."

Wade also stood up for Zion after a backlash involving a family photo posted on Thanksgiving in which commenters criticized Wade and Union for allowing Zion to wear acrylic nails and a crop top. "I've seen some post-thanksgiving hate on social about my family photo," Wade tweeted last month. "Stupidity is a part of this world we live in—so I get it. But here's the thing—I've been chosen to lead my family not y'all. So we will continue to be us and support each other with pride, love & a smile!"

Wade's responses on social media are meant to support more than just his children.

"I understand that I'm speaking for a lot of people who don't have the same voice that I have as a father. I'm even speaking for my 12-year-old right now because I haven't allowed him to sit in front of a microphone yet. I'm speaking for so many others in the LGBTQ+ community."

— END

Quote - Unquote

"Every young person has a right to a sense of self-respect and dignity. In public education we serve the needs of all our students. Some are gay and lesbian and we need to serve them too."

– Dr. Virginia Uribe (1933-2019), Founder of Project 10, in a 1984 LA Times Interview

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.



P.O. Box 24565, Los Angeles, CA 90024
info@pflagLA.org 888.735.2488

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.

PFLAG LOS ANGELES BOARD

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Newsletter Editor: Chris Haiss

Graphic Design: York Knowlton, imagine-Y.com

PFLAG LOS ANGELES SUPPORT 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
guest speakers www.pflagLA.org

GENDER FOCUS

Bienestar in Hollywood
4955 W. Sunset Blvd., LA 90027
2nd Thursday of each month
7:30 - 9:30 pm / Free Parking

BOYLE HEIGHTS (SÓLO ESPAÑOL)

Mi Centro - Boletín
553 S. Clarence St., LA, CA 90033
Segundo miércoles,
7:00 - 9:00 pm / Free Parking

EAST LA (SÓLO ESPAÑOL)

Bienestar East LA
5326 East Beverly Blvd, LA 90022
Tercer jueves,
7:00 pm - 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
Primer miércoles,
7:00 - 9:00 pm / Free Parking

SOUTH LOS ANGELES (SÓLO ESPAÑOL)

St. John's Well Child & Family Center
808 W. 58th Street, LA, 90037
Segundo jueves,
6:00 - 8:00 pm / Street Parking

RESOURCES

SPEAKERS BUREAU

Contact Melanie Woloz at
SpeakersBureau@pflagla.org

INFO / HELP LINES

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

NATIONAL PFLAG ORGANIZATION

PFLAG National
202.467.8180
www.pflag.org

THE TREVOR PROJECT

24-hour suicide prevention line
866.488.7386
www.thetrevorproject.org

YOUTH ADVOCATES COALITION (YAC)

Events Calendar, Resources and Scholarships
www.lalgbyac.org/calendar

REMEMBER

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

www.pflagLA.org