

STARR NEWSLETTER

PARENTS, FAMILIES & FRIENDS ALLIED WITH THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

www.pflagLA.org

President's Message

zoom



Support and Education Goes Virtual!

In response to the COVID pandemic, families throughout the greater Los Angeles area are limiting their contacts to their household and essential trips. That's good news, but it can also mean a lot of stress. Particularly in households where there is an LGBTQ family member, misunderstandings, tension, and even abuse can occur.

PFLAG support meetings are needed more than ever. That's why we began our PFLAG Los Angeles Zoom meetings even before PFLAG National started its excellent "PFLAG Connects" program.

Presently, we are holding two monthly Zoom meetings on their usual day: Gender Focus (second Thursday of the month) and the traditional meeting (third Wednesday). We have revised our group guidelines to address the special issues that arise in a virtual meeting, in particular to protect the privacy of our online participants. We have also implemented the security measures recommended by Zoom and by PFLAG National. The ability to divide people into separate "rooms" helps to maintain the intimacy of in-person groups.

The response has been excellent. Our groups have grown in size, and many people new to PFLAG have participated.

Freed from the chore of fighting traffic, people from a wider area are attending.

I am also pleased to tell you that our Spanish language support meetings are available on Zoom. Currently, they are open only to previous participants because of technical issues. By the end of September, they will be open to all. Check our website for information or to request an invitation.

Our Speakers Bureau has also transitioned to a virtual platform. On August 24, a panel made a presentation to ProVisors. Speakers Bureau coordinators Liz Mullen and Melanie Woloz will begin reconnecting with high school and college teachers who have asked for speakers in the past.

The pandemic is a challenge to all. PFLAG Los Angeles will support LGBTQ people and their families by whatever means are available.



We all know it. This election is the most important in our lifetime. Among the many things at stake are the civil liberties of LGBTQ persons, rights that have been under attack. What are we going to do about it?

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SUPPORT EDUCATION ADVOCACY

President's Message

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Here are suggestions from PFLAG National about using your constitutional rights to make a difference.

- Afraid of COVID? Absentee ballots will be sent to all California registered voters. Return it early, to avoid post office delays.
- Not registered? [Register online](#) or by mail. California registration deadline is October 19.

- Check your [voter registration status](#)
- Educate yourself about the issues.
- Read the party platforms
 - [Green Party](#)
 - [Democratic Party](#)
 - [Republican Party](#) (has adopted its 2016 platform)
 - [Libertarian Party](#) (has adopted its 2018 platform)
- [Review the California ballot](#)
- [Motivate others to Vote](#)
Actions speak louder. Tell others about your plan to vote.

Our Stories

– Stuart Huggins, *Board Member PFLAG Los Angeles*
Identifies as gay (he, him, his)

When did I realize I was gay? I woke up the morning of my 35th birthday in a really deep depression. I didn't know quite how to reconcile my sexuality with my family situation.

My family is very religious and very conservative. Since I was a child, in our church, girls who got pregnant out of wedlock or people who we found out were gay were shipped off to relatives out of town or out of state or they were disowned by their families. However, in our house everybody was welcome. My dad had gay friends that would come up to the house. There wasn't any fear or anything like that in our house. Our church was where we were socialized.

I dated girls and had a steady girlfriend all through my last two years of high school. The question of my sexuality didn't really occur to me until I was 35. I had a really beautiful relationship with a woman at that point. I needed to figure out what was going on with me, what was I feeling and how do I deal with it. I was working at Pepperdine University. A friend of mine who was working in the counseling center suggested that I seek outside counsel. I don't know how she knew. But she ultimately sent me to Joe Nicolosi. He's the doctor who developed the reparative therapy method. It's his work that sprouted a lot of what we now call "ex-gay ministries".

I got involved with an ex-gay ministry in Culver City. I was living in Malibu at the time. Every Wednesday I would drive to Culver City for these meetings where we read scripture, sang songs and had chat groups where we talked about our issues. I had this book that I was supposed to read during the program.

“... the gist of ex-gay therapy is you had to figure out a way to distance yourself from the experiences you had as a small child with a distant father.”

Basically, the gist of ex-gay therapy is you had to figure out a way to distance yourself from the experiences you had as a small child with a distant father. When I was five or six, my father was working in a different city. He would be away during the week and home on weekends. In my formative years he was not available to me on a regular basis. Their theory was because of that, I developed an abnormal attachment to my mother and an attraction to men as sexual beings. *(continued on the following page)*

Our Stories

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I attended these meetings for 18 months, going to weekend retreats, exploring what I thought my sexuality would be. I was open to the possibility that I might be gay, however I knew there'd be problems, at home, work and church. Ultimately, I would have to choose between living a lie or living my truth. This is what was driving my depression.

At the end of the program they have a graduation ceremony. I was sitting in the car getting ready to go into the church building and I felt a wave of emotion wash over me. What am I doing? I felt fearful and paralyzed. I was uncontrollably crying, I couldn't stop sobbing. Then I felt the presence of God telling me, "Listen, I created you the way I wanted you to be. Figure out a way to make that work for you." I felt Him so powerfully. Still I was mourning what I thought was the end of my life as I knew it, something unknown. But underneath all of this I felt peace. I made the decision that whatever the consequences, I was going to figure out a way to live a congruent life. God created me to be who I am.

“... we had a really long conversation
about life, love, church and family.

At one point, she said, 'Is there
something you want to tell me?

Do you have cancer or something?

What's going on?'"

Even today I get emotional when I think about how the Spirit guided me through the process without feeling I needed to take my life.

I was still working at Pepperdine and I knew the administration and the Dean of Students had a problem with LGBT people. I knew at some point there would be a problem with my career.

York and I met in 1997. We really enjoyed spending time together and getting to know each other. I strategically introduced York to my parents. We spent Sundays at their home, we'd go to church with them and after church we'd have lunch at my mom's favorite restaurants. They both welcomed him as part of the family which I thought was really cool. Except they didn't know the big piece of information.

About a year and a half later our relationship progressed and we knew it was time to come out to my family and work colleagues. I found the Los Angeles LGBT Center and a coming-out group I could attend. While there I got the Center's newsletter, *The Vanguard*, where I saw a small ad for PFLAG Los Angeles. At my first meeting I met Joel Hendler who was president of PFLAG Los Angeles. Joel, his wife Rosemary and I became close friends. They nurtured, mentored and helped me navigate the coming-out process, and became my PFLAG parents.

I attended two additional PFLAG meetings and after the third meeting, I drove to my folks' home in Oxnard. I sat down with my mom and we had a long conversation about life, love, church and family. At one point, she said, "Is there something that you want to tell me? Do you have cancer or something? What's going on?" Finally, I told her. She said, "So does that mean that you are...?" I said, "Well yes, I'm gay, York's my significant other, my partner, and we have a really great relationship." Her response upon hearing this was, "We knew, we've known for some time, we were just waiting for you to tell us."

We had a long conversation about what it meant for me to be gay. Near the end she wanted to know who she could tell. I told her I wanted her to feel comfortable sharing with our family, her girlfriends, church friends and people who are important to her. I wanted her to find support wherever she could.

Before I left that night, she asked some important questions. Among them, what was the current state of my physical and mental health. Did I ever contemplate suicide? Were we being safe? [\(continued on the following page\)](#)

Our Stories

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The next question was, “How serious is your relationship with York?” I was honest, “I think we have what it takes to go the distance and I think having you and dad be part of our lives while we figure this out would be very helpful.” Next she said, “Well you know we love you; we’re not going anywhere. You have all of our love and support. You don’t have to worry about us.” I told her I was concerned about church. She said, “Don’t worry about church, I will handle them, however I do want you to consider continuing to attend church. That’s the important thing for me.” I said, “I will continue to go with the understanding that if things get uncomfortable for me or York, then we will need to make a decision about what happens at that point.” She said, “Yes I understand, and that’s not a problem for us.”

“By the time I got home there was a voice mail from dad saying, ‘I love you and you’re my son, nothing changes between us.’”

She continued, “With that off the table, you have a responsibility. Now that you know we love you, your task is to help others who don’t have that kind of support. I want you to be the person they could come to for help if they need it. We will love anybody you bring into this house.” My head nearly exploded when she said this because I was concerned how this might affect her standing in the church.

Mom then asked me if I wanted to tell my dad or if I wanted her to tell him. I told her, “Yeah, if you don’t mind telling dad, I would love that.”

I left that night and went home to Malibu. By the time I got home there was a voice mail from dad saying, “I love you and you’re my son, nothing changes between us. Mom explained what was going on, that you’re concerned about church, and we together are going to deal with this however it plays out.”

I fully expected that my parents would be shunned by people at church; that we would have to leave the congregation we’d been attending for 30 years by that time. This was a real concern for me. The backlash I expected never materialized, quite the contrary. The love and acceptance we experienced far exceeded my expectations.

I had no doubt that after I left my mom that night, she got on the phone with her girlfriends and said, ‘Stuart’s gay and I’m really excited. *(continued on the following page)*

**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

Our Stories

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If you want to be part of my life then you will accept him as well because we don't want any crap.' That was my mother and that's how she handled things. She took the bull by the horns. Always.

At PFLAG we talk about how parents find a closet of their own once their kid comes out. I think the total time my parents spent in the closet was literally between 5 and 15 minutes while I explained to her what was going on with me. After that, she was fully on board, fully accepting, fully ready to take on anybody who could hurt us. There was never a doubt in her mind that her love for us superseded everything.

Over time, York, my parents and I formed this very tight family. Literally, my parents became his parents. When my mom passed away about a year and a half after this conversation, he was just as devastated as I was.

About a week later I got a letter from one of my mom's sisters. In it she wrote, 'You're going to hell and I can't stop you if you're going to live this lifestyle.' I showed the letter to my dad and said, "Dad, what do you think about this?" He said, "You know what, give her some time, she'll come around, most people do." That was his advice, and true to form, it came to pass she and her family attended many events at our home. Now they are just as much allies for us as my folks were.

My parents knew I was a contributing member of my community. I was the person they raised. They lived the Bible they read. Unconditional love is a big part of that. The ex-gay ministry time taught me who God is and how big of a part He plays in my life, no matter what my sexual orientation is, no matter what my gender identity is. He is here with me.

I think the problem people have is the fear of being alone. Because their parents don't accept them, they feel totally isolated, totally alone. And I think the beauty of PFLAG is we try to fill the gap, if only for two hours once a month. The acceptance that I got from Joel, Rosemary, Mariette, Sandy, Karen and Barry as well as all the other wonderful

“At PFLAG we talk about how parents find a closet of their own once their kid comes out. I think the total time my parents spent in the closet was literally between 5 and 15 minutes.”

people at PFLAG Los Angeles who loved me and saw something in me that was worth saving.

While we lived in South Los Angeles, York and I attended our local congregation which happened to be the one my parents helped start in the 1960s. My grandmother, aunts, uncles and cousins filled the first three pews of the church. The congregation saw how we cared for each of our elders; the love and respect we showed every elder in the church. Many in the church grew to love both York and me as their own sons. I believe that our presence in those pews every Sunday changed hearts and minds about the LGBTQ community.

For a year, I was privileged to facilitate the PFLAG Los Angeles support group in South Los Angeles. The major concern of people who came to the meetings there was religion. The churches have a heavy influence in South LA, whether they are Catholic, Baptist or African Methodist Episcopal. This is a big sticking point for a lot of families with LGBTQ members.

PFLAG Los Angeles was the place where I could come and share the ups and downs of my coming out story. It was a rollercoaster for a little while, trying to figure out how to reconcile my spiritual life with my professional life and my personal life. What got me through was my faith, the relationship with my husband York, my family, friends and PFLAG Los Angeles. They were the ones who loved me and took care of both of us; they were there for us the whole time. It's been an incredible trip and I feel PFLAG Los Angeles rescued me. PFLAG changes hearts and minds, helping families come out stronger. – END

TransAction

Meet Texas Isaiah, First Trans Photographer to Shoot 'Vogue' Cover

Texas Isaiah, the Brooklyn-born Los Angeles-based photographer, became the first trans photographer to shoot for the cover of any Vogue edition. He was joined by Misan Harriman, Philip-Daniel Ducasse, and Eddie Hernandez in shooting for the various panels for the September issue of British Vogue.

Read the full article and interview by Mikelle Street about how the opportunity came about for Texas, how he approached the images, and what it means for a Black trans masculine photographer to control the gaze in a medium and genre that's long been directed by cisgender, white men.

[\[www.out.com/media/2020/8/06/meet-texas-isaiah-first-trans-photographer-shoot-vogue-cover\]](http://www.out.com/media/2020/8/06/meet-texas-isaiah-first-trans-photographer-shoot-vogue-cover)

Why I must come out

If you have not yet heard Genna Rocero's powerful TED Talk from March 2014 "Why I must come out" you've missed something. Geena, a professional model for fashion and beauty companies around the world, talks about being transgender and being true to oneself. "All of us are put in boxes by our family, by our religion, by our society, our moment in history, even our own bodies. Some people have the courage to break free, not to accept the limitations imposed by the color of their skin or by the beliefs of those that surround them. Those people are always the threat to the status quo, to what is considered acceptable."

Geena was the August 2019 Playboy Playmate and made history as the first trans woman to be part of the iconic 2020 Playmates of the Year.

[\[www.ted.com/talks/geena_rocero_why_i_must_come_out\]](http://www.ted.com/talks/geena_rocero_why_i_must_come_out)

Jennifer Lopez: Meet Brendon

Superstar Jennifer Lopez took to Instagram over the weekend to share a clip from a new short film about her nibling, Brendon. 'Nibling' is the gender-neutral term for a niece or nephew, and the film *Draw with Me* tells of Brendon's experiences coming to terms with being trans and the use of art as an outlet.

"*Draw with Me* is a short film about a transgender youth and their journey of coming out to their family and also engaging in their art to help them cope with the feelings they were having during this time," Lopez explained in her Instagram post.

Lopez shared a five-minute clip of *Draw with Me*, which tells the story of Brendon's experiences through their own words as well as those of their parents and others. Brendon is the child of Lopez's sister and brother-in-law, Leslie Lopez and Rob Scholl.

"The film is important and timely in its story and message and can have a huge impact on those of us who watch and experience what Brendon and their family is going through in this time of acceptance and admission," Lopez explained.

[\[www.out.com/transgender/2020/8/24/jennifer-lopez-introduces-world-trans-family-member-film\]](http://www.out.com/transgender/2020/8/24/jennifer-lopez-introduces-world-trans-family-member-film)

Thank you, Gavin Grimm!

A federal appeals court has once again ruled in favor of Gavin Grimm, a transgender Virginia student who sued his school district over his exclusion from using the boys' restrooms, as reported by Trudy Ring for Advocate.com

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit issued a decision saying the Gloucester County School Board violated federal law and the U.S. Constitution by requiring him to use separate, single-stall restrooms, which "might as well have had 'Gavin' on the sign," as Judge Henry F. Floyd wrote in the majority opinion, which applies not only to Grimm's district but to trans-exclusionary restroom policies in general within the circuit, which covers Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and North and South Carolina. It also sets precedent for other courts to draw on.

"Transgender students belong in our schools," added Josh Block, senior staff attorney with the ACLU LGBT & HIV Project. "The court once again ruled that school's obligation to create an environment that is safe and welcoming for all students includes transgender students."

[\[www.advocate.com/transgender/2020/8/26/anti-trans-school-restroom-policies-unconstitutional-court-rules\]](http://www.advocate.com/transgender/2020/8/26/anti-trans-school-restroom-policies-unconstitutional-court-rules)

Quote - Unquote

"I am transgender and this doesn't mean
that I am unlovable."

— Lana Wachowski, *Film & Television Director*

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.

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.



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REMEMBER

When you no longer need **PFLAG**, that's when **PFLAG** needs you!

PFLAG LOS ANGELES SUPPORT MEETINGS

Join us each month at our
online support meetings!

Visit our website to RSVP – www.pflagLA.org

WESTWOOD

3rd Wednesday of each month
7:00 - 8:30 pm

GENDER FOCUS

2nd Thursday of each month
7:00 - 9:00 pm

PFLAG ESPAÑOL

facebook.com/pflagsocalespanol

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

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