

THE BANNER OF THE DESERT

PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVENTH
YEAR December, 2007 Volume 27, No.12

Next Meeting

December 16th , Sunday, 2:30 P.M.

We are having a Holiday Potluck at the home of Barbara and Stuart Lynn

Please call 760.202.4430 for driving instructions and further details. All are welcome.

George and Jacquie Spenser To Be Honored At December PFLAG Party

Our former co-presidents and board members have moved from this area; but, will return for the December 16th party. We will honor their years of service and caring that made them much beloved in the Palm Springs/Desert Communities.

PFLAG INFORMATION LINE Telephone: 760-202-4430

MAILING ADDRESS PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities Chapter Post Office Box 402
Cathedral City, CA 92235

info@pspflag.org

A Message From The Editor

-Mike Balasa

Have you ever wondered what some of the anti-gay leaders would say if they were put in a “truth machine”? Using a little imagination, I think I know the answer. Here is what I believe we would hear from James Dobson, Focus on the Family head. Remember he can’t lie.

“We would rather put all our emphasis on doing something about the high divorce rate, teenage pregnancy and child abuse in the fundamentalist community but that doesn’t raise money. You have to scare the folks so they feel compelled to open their purses. Most of our donors are frightened to death that their kids will turn gay when exposed to gay culture, and we raise millions using that threat. Gays are such an easy target. No one complains about lying and smearing gays and lesbians. We even make many gay people so guilty, they gladly join us and make believe they’re straight. Parents of gays often send us loads of money in hopes that we can save their kids. We did pretty good with the communist scare in the 50’s and 60’s but this is far better.”

If I were to put one of the closeted politicians or preachers caught in a gay-sex scandal in the truth machine I suspect this would be his statement.

“I really don’t think of myself as gay. I just need to have that outlet once in awhile. Most of the time I’m really quite straight. When I do succumb to those deep and persistent urges, I feel awful and I wish I were stronger. I just can’t let my church and family down and admit that I have gay feelings. I really feel tortured and twisted inside. My life feels like a sham. Sometimes I wish I were caught and exposed so I wouldn’t have to keep the secret anymore. I hope my church friends remember all the anti-gay laws I help passed and all the anti-gay speeches I’ve made when I’m finally exposed.”

This little foray into the world of truth and candor is really depressing and sordid, isn’t it?

UCLA Researcher, Gary Gates, Studies Gay Demographics

Gary Gates, Senior Research Fellow at the Charles R. Williams Project on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy at the UCLA School of Law, is rapidly becoming the foremost authority on GLBT statistics. His research was featured in a New York Times article that quoted Dr. Gates demographic conclusions that found that the GLBT community is following the same pattern that immigrant communities underwent in the first part of the last century. Gates concluded that, “Society is beginning to say that being gay is not such a big deal. What that means for gays is that homosexuality won’t have the centrality to their identity it once did. Being gay then becomes one of a variety of an individual’s competing identities. In other words, as the challenges associated with coming out diminish, so does the primacy of the identity that that act of self-discovery and self-assertion once forged. It means that the culture once associated with gay identity becomes less distinctive from the mainstream. The process is similar to that of many immigrants or minority groups in America. They moved beyond their enclaves and then felt a little sad that they lost the embracing sense of uniqueness and community they once enjoyed. But isn’t that what everyone wanted 20 years ago. Just to be treated like everyone else.”

Gates has also studied the “gays in the military situation” and has published a report estimating that 65,000 gay men and lesbians are now serving in the military. He maintains that each year 3,000 military members leave the service because of the gay ban. Each year the military needs 18,400 new recruits and the 3,000 number is 1/6th of that total.

Gates is also credited with helping the Census Bureau obtain a more accurate count of same-sex couples and a better description of gay families. The new census data shows that same-sex partners have quadrupled since 1990 to over 650,000 couples. Same-sex couples raising children are found in 96% of all counties in the US and that three of the five large metropolitan areas with the highest rate of child rearing among same-sex couples are found in Texas: San Antonio, Houston and Fort Worth. He also found that same-sex couples tend to be ethnically diverse. States with high rates of same-sex couples raising children are South Dakota, Alaska, South Carolina and Louisiana.

Salvation Army Anti-Gay?

Since 2001 when the Salvation Army reversed a decision to offer health benefits to employees with same-sex partners, GLBT groups have encouraged people to not donate to that group. PFLAG national sent a message this past month to local PFLAG chapters to use their best judgment in deciding whether or not to support their local Salvation Army charities. Some chapters have produced and distributed “fake dollars” to be placed in collection kettles. The “fake dollars” make the statement that real dollars would have been donated if the organization would change their discriminatory policies.

Our chapter has not taken a position on contributing to the Salvation Army or any other organization run by groups who have opposed GLBT civil rights. Editors note: the PFLAG board will consider a policy on this issue in the future. If you have an opinion on this matter, please talk to one of the board members or call the PFLAG information line.

Beware the “Watchmen On the Walls”A small but rabidly anti-gay group, “Watchmen on the Walls”, originating in Russia, Latvia, Ukraine and other countries from the former Soviet Union, is active in the United States. They have a strong following in the Sacramento Valley centered among Russian and Ukrainian immigrants. There are also groups in Seattle and Portland. Members of this group preside over anti-gay rallies where gays have been compared to thieves, adulterers and murderers.

A leader of “Watchmen on the Walls”, Scott Lively, wrote, “We church leaders need to stop being, for lack of a better word, sissies, when it comes to social and political issues. For every motherly, feminine ministry of the church such as a crisis pregnancy center or ex-gay support group we need a battle-hardened, take it to the enemy, masculine ministry like Operation Rescue” (the militant anti-abortion group known for picketing clinics). The “Watchmen” have appeared at both the California and Oregon state capitols in large numbers to protest gay-friendly bills. They are usually the group that turns out at gay-pride parades to harass pride marchers.

PFLAG Participated in World AIDs Day Service at Temple IsaiahPFLAG co-presidents, Mike and Carol Balasa attended the World AID’s Day service at Temple Isaiah in Palm Springs on November 30th. An information table was set up and literature, including chapter brochures and newsletters was given to interested persons. PFLAG was honored when Mike and Carol were asked to open and close the ark doors during the Shabbat service. **New Law Prohibiting School Instruction that Promotes Discrimination Under Fire**

A new law, SB 277, signed by Governor Schwarzenegger, prohibiting instruction that promotes discrimination against persons because of sexual orientation, is under fire from far-right anti-gay groups. Sexual orientation was added to a law already in existence that prohibited discriminatory instruction involving race, sex, creed, handicap, national origin or ancestry. Anti-gay activists who believe that gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered persons are immoral aberrations, are

initiating a referendum petition to overturn the law. The anti-gay forces also filed a federal lawsuit contending that SB277 is constitutionally vague and violates the privacy of students, teachers and others on school campuses.

State Senator Sheila Kuehl, Democrat from Santa Monica, has stated that the measure is necessary to protect gays and others from being harassed in school. Anti-gay leaders say the bill will unfairly silence anyone who is morally opposed to homosexuality. Other critics of the bill include some educators who fear that any mention of protected groups in class discussion could be offensive to someone and promote troublesome lawsuits.

Do Gay Men Suffer From Eating Disorders? Columbia University researchers have found that gay men have a higher incidence of eating disorders than straight men. The study reported that of the gay men studied, 15% had suffered from some type of eating disorder. Only 5% of straight men had eating problems. **Siegfried and Roy Comeback** Roy Horn, age 63, mauled by a tiger in 2003, is now planning on resurrecting the act with his long time partner, Siegfried Fischbacher. Roy, who was near death, has made a miraculous recovery and attends rehabilitation sessions and gym, three times a week. Siegfried told reporters, "I am the magician and Roy is the magic. And Roy shows me every day the magic—the magic of life."

Senator Craig May Have Been Lying When He Said "I Am Not Gay"

Idaho senator, Larry Craig, who was arrested for indecent behavior in a public restroom has continued to insist that he is not gay. Now eight men have come forward to tell their stories of encounters with Senator Craig. The first four men to come forward in a story appearing in the "Idaho Statesman" newspaper said they were angry at Craig's lies and his history of voting against GLBT civil rights. Two of the men reported having sex with Craig, one said Craig made a pass at him and the fourth man said Craig paid "unusual attention" to him. **Out Republican Gay Man Wins City Council Race In Georgia**

A groundbreaking win to a city council seat in a small town, Doraville, in rural Georgia is another indicator that acceptance of gays is gaining in the South. Brian Bates, a republican and openly gay, easily won the council seat. Kyle Bailey, political director for Georgia Equality, said, "This is a sign of progress of the LGBT community showing that we are your neighbors. Number one, Bates is representing the people of Doraville, but he also provides an important voice to the Republican Party, and he could help the Republican Party in Georgia move to a place where it's welcoming to LGBT persons."

Bates told "The Atlantic Journal-Constitution", "I am gay, and there's no reason to hide it. I made the conscious decision to be open and honest about my orientation. It really didn't come up with my conversations with voters, and for the most part, I don't think they care."

Sequel to “Brokeback Mountain” Proposed A Hollywood news source reports that Heath Ledger, the gay cowboy in the Ang Lee film, “Brokeback Mountain”, is negotiating a contract to reprise his role as Ennis Del Mar. The film deals with the difficult process of coming out and being openly gay in 1963 middle America. Ang Lee won an Oscar for directing “Brokeback Mountain”. **Holiday PFLAG Potluck Party December 16th, 2:30 P.M.**

(Note: There Will Not Be A Meeting At The Cathedral City Library)The party will be held at the home of Barbara and Stuart Lynn. Please call (760)202-4430 for driving instructions.PLEASE BRING AN APPETIZER, SALAD, SIDE DISH OR DESSERT .PFLAG will provide eating utensils, ham and turkey, beverages, French bread and butter. Further questions? Or help with directions call the PFLAG help line 760-202-4430

Wisconsin Ban on Same-Sex Unions Challenged

A Wisconsin Judge has ruled that a court challenge to the constitutional amendment banning same-sex unions may go forward. The amendment was passed by Wisconsin voters last year with a 59% plurality. A Wisconsin-Oshkosh political science instructor, William McConkey, brought the lawsuit because it asks two questions: same-sex unions and another concerning civil unions. Wisconsin law requires that a referendum issue can address only one question at a time. McConkey also claimed in the suit that the amendment violates the equal protection clause of the U.S. constitution.

McConkey describes himself as Christian straight man, married and the father of nine children and grandfather of seven.

AT THE JANUARY PFLAG MEETING OUR SPEAKER WILL BE BOB GREENBAUM, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF THE FILM: “FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO”.